

AN: This is a Post-OOTP story. Harry's long summer after Sirius's death, he finally grows up. Will have Harry-Tonks (Honks) pairing, maybe some HGRW. Rated Mature for later chapters :Violence & Sexual Content. You have been warned. Novel Length.

I'd like to thank Lordddwar & Volans for their great honks stories which served as the primary inspiration for my own, any plagiarism is unintentional, but with over 300K Harry Potter stories, I'm am realistic. If you notice blatant plagiarism, let me know and I will apologize personally and give credit to where it is due. I've been reading stories on this sight for over two years, and many elements from many stories will probably be included.

I DO NOT OWN HARRY POTTER, nor do I have any money, so don't bother trying to sue me. I do this for fun, and it is a lot of fun, so on with the story...

Harry Potter & the Never-Ending Summer, by Kassien

(Updated: 6/20/07)

Chapter 1

Sat. 17th of June

The long car ride from King's Cross passed in relative silence at first as the three Dursley's came to grips with the threats they just received from four scary looking adult wizards. The silence however was most welcomed by the long member of the car ride without the last name of Dursley. Harry Potter, "The Boy Who Lived", sat in the back seat behind his whale of an uncle and next to the even bigger whale of a cousin. He had spent the first part of the long car ride in a daze, blankly starring out the window as the scenery flew by in a rushed blur. He wasn't really looking at anything however, as his eyes were glazed and watery. He had hoped to never see his so-called 'family' again, especially after learning about his Godfather, Sirius Black, two years ago. But even his greatest hopes were now destroyed again, and by none other than his greatest enemy and tormentor, Lord Voldemort.

The same Lord Voldemort, who was responsible for his parents' death, for his annoying scar, for living with the Dursley's, and for the terror in the wizarding world. Harry had always hated Voldemort from the second Hagrid, the Half-Giant, had told him about the most evil wizard of the age, but now his hatred and the rage he felt towards him was burning inside of him and threatening to consume him. Harry felt like he had been dealt the final blows already. Sirius Black, his Godfather was dead. Harry still couldn't believe it, it had only happened days prior, and still every minute of his days and nights had been spent reliving the night in the Department of Mysteries. He watched over and over again as Sirius slowly fell through the veil, all the while with the voice of Bellatrix Lestrange ringing in his ears.

Bellatrix, even thinking about her made every hair on his neck stand alert and caused his body to start shaking under the suppressed rage he felt trying to overtake him. He knew he was fighting a losing battle, any day now his rage would take over, and he did not think he would be able to control it much longer. Every night since the Department of Mysteries, his dreams came with more intensity, but the intensity isn't what scared him the most, it was how he felt afterwards. He was always scared and shaking and sometimes crying, but now the growing hate in him was tainting everything, he now wanted revenge. And not just a justified or righteous revenge, he wanted to kill Voldemort and Bellatrix, and he wanted them to have to suffer pain beyond imagination, pain he felt every second of every day. He wanted them to have total fear in their eyes, as he had to witness the fear in the eyes of those around him.

As he continued to sit and stare in the silent car thinking over the last few days again, he could feel the wave of pain and panic pass over him again as he began sobbing pathetically into his hands.

"Be quiet boy," snarled Uncle Vernon from the front seat obviously caught off guard by the 'freak' crying. He immediately remembered the threats not to mistreat the 'boy', and his face stiffened and began changing colors at will. It went from pale and pasty, to pink, to red, and finally to a purplish color where it stayed for many minutes as everyone could hear Uncle Vernon mumbling to himself angrily.

Harry continued to cry, but grew much quieter after the yelling from his uncle. He was however, still drawing very nervous glances from his Aunt Petunia in the passenger's seat, as well as from his oversized cousin Dudley next to him. Neither had ever liked Harry or treated him well, but they were both very nervous looking at the fifteen year old boy crying silently. They had never really seen him cry, get angry, yes; but never break down and cry. They both knew how hard his life was with them, and yet he never cried in front of them. Aunt Petunia immediately knew that something was seriously wrong, for the boy to act weak in front of them, especially Vernon. They tried to ignore Harry as Uncle Vernon's muttering grew louder as they approached Little Winging. They pulled into the driveway at number four Privet Drive, and the three Dursley's immediately exited the car and made their way into their perfect looking house, leaving Harry alone to bring in his enormous school trunk.

Twenty minutes later, and an exhausted Harry had just placed his trunk at the foot of his tiny bed before dropping unceremoniously onto his bed face first. After a few minutes, he heard someone stomping up the stairs and come to a stop right outside his bedroom door. The door was thrown open, with his very large uncle standing in the threshold with a purple face, beady eyes, and bulging veins popping out of his neck and head.

"You will stay in your room; I will not be threatened by your kind. You're lucky you're even still allowed to be here," yelled Uncle Vernon before quickly stepping out of the threshold and closing the bedroom door. Harry heard the distinct sound of him locking all six of the large locks on the outside of his door, and just lay in bed stunned that he wouldn't have to see his 'family' over the summer, despite being a prisoner in his own room.

This was fine for Harry, he was all too used to being locked up in his room or cupboard, and didn't really to be around any of his relatives anyway. Although he would miss the quiet walks around Little Winging, or trips to the small park, Harry really didn't want to deal with any people, wizards or muggle. He stayed in bed for hours crying and thinking, and didn't move until he heard the cat flap on his bedroom door open and a small plate of leftover roast and potatoes being dropped onto his floor. Harry, realizing that he hadn't eaten

much today, quickly picked up the plate and devoured the food in seconds before putting the empty plate back in the hall through the small cat flap. He was still starving, the small amount of food was just a tease to a growing boy, and did little to lift his dreadful mood.

Harry went back into bed without taking off his shoes or clothes and curled up into a small ball and continued crying uncontrollably. He had never felt so bad in his whole life. He was upset after Cedric Diggory was killed at the end of last year, but it was nothing like how he felt now. Sirius was gone, and it was primarily Harry's own fault. He couldn't forgive himself for being so weak and allowing Voldemort to use his love for his Godfather against him. Now that he knew the contents of the prophecy, he understood why he had been having dreams or visions of the Department of Mysteries, but he still couldn't forgive himself for the horrible outcome. Nor could he forgive Voldemort or Bellatrix Lestrange for their involvement, or even his own Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore.

It was Dumbledore's lack of faith or trust in Harry that led him to hide the knowledge of the prophecy and its contents from the one person who it truly affected. He was still so mad for being 'protected' or kept in the dark by his mentor, that he could no longer picture himself ever forgiving or trusting the old man. He hid his destiny from Harry, as well as general knowledge about his past, the lives of his parents, and the Order of Phoenix. He was also responsible for forcing him to stay at the Dursley's every summer, and now Harry was beginning to hate him for it.

Thinking back to the night in his Headmaster's office only a few days ago, the tiniest of grins appeared at the corner of Harry's mouth, as he remembered his trashing of many of the Headmaster's things. He was still beyond angry with the old man, but was starting to feel like his little tantrum did wonders at alleviating some of the resentment towards Dumbledore since Sirius died and the Prophecy was revealed.

Am I really his equal? He asked himself as he thought back to the words of the Prophecy. At this thought, his hand instinctively went to his forehead as he traced his trademark lightning-bolt scar with his index finger. He marked me as his equal. He said to himself

reassuringly as the first true smile since the night at the Ministry appeared on his tired face. But what really is this 'power he knows not' business? It can't be as simple as Dumbledore said; love isn't power, as all the people he loved were dead. He remembered all too well the sacrifice of love that his mother made for him that saved his life, and the sacrifice Sirius made coming to my aid against all those Death Eaters that probably saved Harry's life. He knew that his parents and Sirius had loved him, as do all the Weasley's, Hermoine, and Remus.

Other members of the Order of Phoenix came to his aid that night, and they didn't all love him, most just disliked Voldemort, yet they saved him as well. Thinking about the Order of Phoenix however, was not what Harry wanted to do at all. While there were a few Order members that he truly knew and liked, most were faceless strangers, or loathing Potion Masters. The Order that he was too young to join, yet concerned his life the most, the Order that followed him and kept things from him, and the Order that was the tool of his Headmaster, the manipulative Albus Dumbledore.

Harry slowly started to drift off into an uneasy sleep, thinking about what the Order really did, and if they were even that useful. The DA was not great, but Harry thought that even them, a group of school kids, could probably give as good of a fight to some of the Death Eaters as most of the Order did, with minimal training. Thinking about the DA, or Dumbledore's Army however, brought a foul taste into Harry's already dry mouth as he finally fell into a restless and uneasy sleep.

Harry woke up with a start, his breathing hard and heavy, and sweat dripping off his face and covering his clothed body. He had just seen Sirius fall through the veil for the thousandth time. He looked around his dark room, and it took him a second to remember that he was back at 'home', and that he only just got there. He knew it was still very late; the house was eerily quiet except for the distant sounds of snoring coming from his whale of an uncle. There was no point in trying to go back to sleep now. So he slowly stumbled out of bed and began the task of unpacking his trunk from school.

Hedwig's cage was sitting on top of his trunk empty, Harry had let Hedwig fly home from King's Cross, and she had yet to return. Hedwig was his only friend or company over the summers when stuck at Privet Drive and Harry hated not having her here with him. But Harry would never force her to stay locked up. Even the thought about being locked up brought out his anger at Albus Dumbledore for both his treatment of himself and Sirius.

Harry cleaned Hedwig's cage and set it atop his beat up old wardrobe. He emptied the oversized clothes from his trunk and put them unceremoniously into the wardrobe, while he pulled out all his books and set a few of them on his rickety desk before it started to waiver under the strain. He put the rest on his bed for now, and continued on.

When the trunk was almost empty, Harry's unpacking came to a quick stop as he caught sight of over twenty small pieces of mirrored glass. The broken fragments of the two-way mirror Sirius had given him this past Christmas, which he had destroyed only the other day back at Hogwarts. Harry's eyes began to mist over, and sobs slowly engulfed his whole body as he sat on the floor hung over the trunk crying over the now broken pieces of the mirror. After what must have several hours, judging by the now risen sun, Harry's sobbing continued, until he heard a distant chirp from the slightly open window.

"Hedwig," he called out with a rasped voice from hours of crying, as he ran towards the window and threw it open just in time. His bright white snow owl swooped into the room with a soft grace, and came to a gentle rest on Harry's waiting shoulder.

"Hi Hedwig, ...how are you girl?" asked Harry as his owl affectionately nipped his fingers and hooted happily in reply before flying to her perch above the wardrobe to survey the damage. Harry's spirits immediately began to rise at the presence of his feathered friend, and even the pieces of Sirius' mirror in the bottom of his trunk couldn't hurt his new mood change. He returned his school robes and cloaks, as well as his Firebolt back into his trunk and dragged it next to the rickety old wooden desk. He took all of his spell books and lined and stacked them up on his trunk, so he could actually use the desk to work at before a good breeze destroyed it.

For the next week, Harry moped around the small bedroom, a prisoner at Privet Drive dwelling on his thoughts and dreams, and very unpleasant dreams at that. He had witnessed every encounter in his life between himself and Voldemort, each ending in his terrified screams and loud banging at his door from his annoyed uncle. Harry cared very little what the Dursley's thought and was constantly stuck within his own mind reliving his worst moments in life. By the end of that first week, Harry felt like he had cried himself empty of all feeling, and a strange sort of detachment began to settle over him every time he thought about his godfather and the Prophecy.

His blank detachment was interrupted the following Sunday morning by his Aunt Petunia who came to his bedroom door, and after unlocking the locks, let him out to use the loo. When he came out of the bathroom, his aunt was waiting in his doorway with a small plate with two pieces of toast and a glass of water. After handing them to Harry with a nasty scowl on her horse-like face, she closed and locked him back into his room with three words.

"Clean this room."

Harry, slowly gathered the weeks clutter that had gathered in the small bedroom, and was now awake and refreshed, but bored to death. He was still locked in the smallest bedroom of number four Privet Drive. He didn't really want to see anyone or go anywhere, but he didn't have much else he could do in his bedroom without being able to practice magic. He didn't have the usual summer homework, because he had just completed his O.W.L. year, and didn't yet know how he did, or what classes he would be taking next year.

Knowing his role in the Prophecy, and what he was supposed to do to fulfill it, kill or be killed, Harry knew he should use this time to get smarter, stronger, and more prepared than he'd ever been. He quickly realized that if he wanted to survive this war, then he would have to give a much more serious commitment, and train as if his own life depended on it, which in fact it did. He could use this time to revise and study all of his old text books. He figured to have a good amount of time to study, locked up here in his room for the summer, so he started thinking about different things that he wanted to learn.

On the very top of this list were Occlumency and even possibly Legilimancy, skills he felt were an essential in the upcoming war with Voldemort, lessons with Snape, or meetings with Albus Dumbledore. After those, he was most interested in strengthening his basic magic's; Charms, Transfiguration, and even Defense Against the Dark Arts. He was also slightly interested in Potions or Herbology, mainly for their healing capabilities, another skill he would very much like to learn as well. He didn't want to spend any more time in the hospital wing than he already had, and he knew his life was not going to get any easier in the coming months or years.

Finally, Harry knew that he would have to get into better physical shape. He is much too small and weak, and although he had amazingly fast reflexes, he also tired too easily. The biggest problem with working out however, was that right now he wasn't being fed enough to do it properly, and didn't know how long he could even survive on the miserable amounts of food he had been given so far. He decided to wait until he had some real food in his stomach before doing much physical exercise.

Harry made his way to his desk, and pulled out his previous texts for Defense Against the Dark Arts. He spent the entire day sitting or lying around his room, re-reading all of his old books, while making notes every once in a while in a muggle notebook Hermione had got him to help study the previous year which he ignored. At some point in the afternoon, Harry's aunt let him out to use the loo, but his day went by completely uninterrupted. He was brought very meager amounts of food for lunch and dinner, and by sharing a little with Hedwig, Harry's hunger was rapidly growing out of control. He devoured a few chocolate frogs that he found in his school trunk, and continued reading deep into the night before exhaustion and hunger overcame his body and he fell off into another fitful sleep.

Harry awoke Monday morning to the sound of his uncle's car pulling out of the driveway, and quickly found and put on his glasses which had fallen off in the night. Within minutes after his uncle had left, he was let out again to shower, and returned to his 'prison' to find two slices of toast and a cup of water near the door. After sharing his pitiful breakfast with Hedwig, and petting the beautiful owl for some



time, Harry continued his task of re-reading everything he'd learned over the last five years of Hogwarts.

He had never considered himself as being very smart, that was Hermione's department, but still revising everything went very quickly and easily. He felt like he remembered everything right away, and only needed to really study certain things. Potions ingredients and theory, something Snape never grasped or passed on; History of Magic, something he normally slept through; and Herbology ingredients and theory, something he never much cared for. Herbology was easily the least interesting of his subjects apart from Divination, but he still wanted to have a more firm base knowledge of the subject. A few questions did stick out in his mind from studying Herbology, and Harry decided that they were good questions to ask Neville Longbottom, the Gryffindor resident Herbologist.

He had been thinking about his friends constantly since the night at the Department of Mysteries, and had wanted to write them all to apologize first for putting them all in such danger, and also to thank them for standing by him, even if he didn't ask them to. Those five friends, he considered his very best, and loved, trusted, and feared for each and every one of them. Harry decided it was time to take a reading break, and began to write letters to his five friends. He figured that a few, if not all of them could be angry with him for putting them in danger or getting them hurt or in trouble. So he decided to only apologize and thank them for now, and not ask for anything until he knew he was still their friend.

Neville,

I'm really sorry about what happened, and I hope you can forgive me for getting you hurt and into trouble. Please tell your Grandmother that I am truly sorry for getting my friends involved. I hope you have a great summer, and thanks so much for believing in me and helping me and being my friend. I truly treasure your friendship, but understand if you no longer want to associate yourself with me.

Harry

Luna,

I hope your having a good summer. I am so sorry for what happened; I hope you can forgive me. I value your friendship a great deal, but would understand if you don't want to be around me anymore, it can be dangerous. Thanks for coming with me and again I'm very sorry.

Harry

Ginny,

Please don't be mad at me, I'm really sorry for almost getting everyone killed. I'd totally understand if you never want to see me or talk to me again. You're a much better friend than I deserve and I can't thank you enough for believing in me enough to join me. Please tell your mum that I am truly sorry for everything.

Harry

P.S. Could you please try and send some food, anything, PLEASE.

Ron,

Hey mate. I'm sorry about all the trouble this year, I hope your mum doesn't kill you, or me for that matter. You're my best mate, and I almost got you and Hermione killed, I'll never forgive myself, I am so sorry Ron. I would totally understand if you hate me and don't want my friendship anymore, I don't deserve it. But thanks for believing in me in the past, I'll never forget it.

Harry

Hermoine,

I am so sorry for everything 'Moine. I hope you're not hurt; I would never forgive myself if something happened to you. Your friendship means so much to me, please write back and let me know that you'll be okay. I am sorry again for not listening to you when you warned me it was a trap, and getting you hurt. I hope your doing well, please forgive me.

Harry

Harry sat back and re-read the letters he had written to his friends, hoping that they would forgive him and not be too angry with him; he had enough anger at himself for all of them combined. They were the only people he had left who truly loved him and believed in him, and whom he trusted, loved, and believed in as well. Hedwig, noticing the gathering up the letters flew down to the desk and started to nip at Harry's finger affectionately as he pet his owl with his left hand. He asked Hedwig to take the letters to his friends and to wait patiently for replies. He tied the letters off and Hedwig gave one last hoot before taking off into the late afternoon sky. Harry watched his only friend at Privet Drive fly away until she became a tiny dot and then vanished from view, before returning to his studying.

The next two days passed very slowly for the teenage wizard trapped at number four Privet Drive. Without the company of his owl, he was forced to sit alone in his room and think or study. He had already read every text book that he owned, and even some fun one's like, Quidditch Through the Ages, and was still returning to study every hour of the day. He was yet again going over his defensive magic texts, and felt pretty confident that he could even teach any of the lessons from his first five years at Hogwarts. In fact, he had already taught some of the lessons, spells, and techniques to the members of the DA.

Harry realized that he still needed to know a lot more if he was ever going to fulfill the Prophecy and defeat Lord Voldemort for good. He couldn't rely on simple stunners and third year leg-locking jinxes when it came to fighting for his own life, or the lives of his friends. The Death Eaters proved the night at the Department of Mysteries that they were playing for keeps, it wasn't some little hex that almost killed Hermione, it was a very powerful Dark Art cutting curse that few Hogwarts students had ever seen, let alone learned how to counter or fight.

Harry knew that he would have to train and study harder than ever if he wanted to get out of this war alive. And even that would never be a guarantee; he would never be able to rest as long as Voldemort was still out there. Neither can live while the other Survives. It wasn't just

the Prophecy anymore, although that did help confirm Harry's thoughts and fears. No, it was Harry's own desire to rid the world of the most evil being to walk among it. To avenge the deaths of his parents, Sirius, Cedric, and countless others who suffered at the hands of Voldemort or his Death Eaters. To make Voldemort feel the pain that Harry was now so accustomed to. To fulfill Voldemort's only real fear, death.

Harry lay in bed late into the early morning wishing and hoping that he would survive this war, and destroy the man who had made his life what it was. He no longer held the anger he did at the very end of term towards Dumbledore and Snape, although he wasn't happy with either, he knew who the blame really fell on. He lied around for hours thinking up ways to make Voldemort hurt, suffer, and eventually die. He realized now after reliving the night so many times, that it had hurt Voldemort when he tried to possess him almost three weeks ago in the Ministry's atrium.

From what Dumbledore had said about the Prophecy, Voldemort couldn't possess Harry because of the love he has within him. This same love that is supposedly the 'power he knows not', but how can he use it to kill the evil Dark Lord. He's not likely to try possessing Harry again anytime soon, but how else could Harry's love hurt something that evil. His blood protection was gone, so Harry's touch was no longer fatal to the Dark Lord, and Harry also wondered how the blood wards at Privet Drive were now affected. He and Voldemort now shared the same blood, so how could his aunt's house protect him any longer? That was another question he had for Professor Dumbledore whenever he had the chance to talk to him. And then it happened all of a sudden, a wave of pain exploded across his scar and a stifled scream escaped his mouth before everything went black, and Harry slipped into unconsciousness.

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Everyone was slowly gathering around the large wooden kitchen table of number 12 Grimmauld Place, preparing for another meeting of the Order of Phoenix. Albus Dumbledore peered around the table at the gathered side of the Light with a small twinkle in his eyes as he stood up to begin that Wednesday night's meeting.

"I'd like to thank all of you for joining us tonight, we have just a few reports to listen to, and first I'd like to hear from Harry's guards on what the boy has been up to, Nymphadora..."

Nymphadora Tonks, shuddered at the mention of her first name, she hated it so much and usually cursed anyone that dared call her by it, except for her parents, and of course, her old Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore.

"Harry hasn't left the house once since he got back from King's Cross, in fact, I don't know if he's even left his room at all," Tonks said with a little apprehension in her voice after expressing her view in front of everyone.

"Have neither yourself or Mundungus spoken to him?" asked Dumbledore with a hint of worry behind his words.

"No," they both replied in unison.

"Very well," replied Dumbledore as the twinkle in his eyes vanished and it appeared as if he had aged decade's right before them. "I fear that our young Mr. Potter, is dealing with an awful lot right now, and has shown tendencies in the past to bottle up these feelings and withdraw from those around him. The depression and blame he placed on himself after Cedric's death last year spoke volumes of not only his love and compassion, but also of his pain and guilt.

"He can't be blaming himself for Sirius can he?" asked Molly Weasley with fear in her eyes and heart over the boy she had loved as a Son since she first saw over five years ago.

"I'm afraid Molly, that he blames himself a great deal over the events of that night. If you need proof, you only need to see the destruction he caused in my office after we returned," spoke Albus quietly. Every pair of eyes in the room widened in worry over 'The Boy Who Lived', all eyes except one pair.

"That's just like Potter to think he's more important than the rest of us ..." spat the Potion Master, Severus Snape. "...That rules don't apply

to him,-" he continued before being cut off by the Headmaster as most members of the Order glared daggers at the hated Head of Slytherin House.

"That is enough, Severus," cut in Dumbledore abruptly. "Remus ..." he continued as his eyes fell on the worn face of Sirius Black's best friend, the Werewolf, Remus Lupin. "...could you possibly try to write Harry a letter, try to break the ice, see if we can get a sense of what's going on with him?"

"Of course, sir," replied Remus.

"Molly, has Ron heard from Harry at all?" asked Albus as he turned to the motherly matriarch of seven Weasley's and a Potter.

"Hedwig delivered letters to him and Ginny this morning, but I have no idea what was said, only that Hedwig left later in the afternoon with a small package of food that Ginny prepared," replied an extremely nervous Molly Weasley. "You don't think he's being mistreated, do you Albus?" she asked with growing panic in her voice.

"He better not be after the talk we had with those no good muggle relatives of his," replied the scar faced ex-Auror, Alastor "Mad Eye" Moody quietly.

"And what talk are you referring to, Alastor?" asked a now curious Headmaster.

"We told the muggles to behave, and to treat him right or we'd do something about it," sneered Moody. "We should have heard something from the boy by now, though."

"Why do you say that?" interrupted the strict Transfiguration Professor, Minerva McGonagall with a raised eyebrow as she glared at "Mad Eye" Moody.

"Uh...we may have said something about writing us every three days to scare the muggles and keep them in line," answered Moody shrewdly.

“We?” inquired Dumbledore with his characteristic eye twinkle coming back in full force, and a small grin forming at the edge of his mouth.

“It was me, Moody, Arthur, and Tonks,” replied Remus Lupin intently, “and I intend to hold them to it.”

“Very well, we will discuss this more at a later time, for now I’d like to hear what Voldemort and his Death Eaters are up to, Severus?” spoke Dumbledore trying to get the meeting back on track, as he eyed his Potions Master.

“Many of the Death Eaters left are underlings; most of the inner circle was caught last week. We have not seen the Dark Lord since that night, and I believe he may have been injured. The only people who have seen him are Wormtail and Bellatrix, and they have me brewing a few restorative draughts and strengthening potions, as well as pain relief potions, but have not specified what or whom they are for, while they continue recruiting efforts” he stated as his eyes locked with the Headmasters before continuing. “You never told me that you injured the Dark Lord during your duel, sir?”

Several gasps were heard around the room as this question was asked and the implications behind it were contemplated by those in the meeting.

“That is because I did not, Severus...” replied Dumbledore to the shocked crowd. “Voldemort had the upper hand for most of the duel, until he made a mistake that I am sure he now seems to be regretting, and a mistake I doubt he will make again,” finished the aged Headmaster.

“What mistake?” demanded Severus Snape as he stared down one of the most powerful wizards in the world, not believing his ears that the Dark Lord could make any mistakes?

After a very long pause, where Dumbledore continued to look at the expecting faces around the room, he began to answer.

“He made the mistake of trying to possess someone so filled with love that I think it severely injured him,” answered Dumbledore calmly and slowly.

“WHAT!” screamed several Order members at once, as several others let varying gasps escape their mouths?

“He possessed Harry?” asked a white faces Arthur Weasley who seemed to be supporting his even more horror stricken wife.

“Yes,” replied Dumbledore over growing noise level of the meeting. He quickly stood and silenced the room before continuing to speak with a commanding authority that immediately settled down the Order members. “He did possess young Mr. Potter, but as I said was spectacularly unsuccessful before fleeing with Mrs. Lestranger.”

“Sir?” began Dedalus Diggle, a short wizard in purple robes and a large equally purple awkward hat before receiving a nod from Dumbledore to ask his question. “How is it that the six kids survived a battle between a dozen of the best Death Eaters?”

Many of those in attendance eagerly began nodding their heads and murmuring excitedly, all wanting to know the answer to this question.

“Unfortunately, Mr. Potter was not very forthcoming in details when we met afterwards in my office, so I don’t know that whole story, however, Mr. Weasley and Ms. Granger were able to fill in some of the story when I spoke with them in the Hospital Wing,” started Albus Dumbledore to the eager Order, before taking a deep breath and continuing with most of the story as he knew it.

“Apparently, Mr. Potter received a vision showing him his Godfather being tortured at the Department of Mysteries. His friends, not wanting to abandon him, followed him to the Ministry on the back of Thestrals. Harry apparently tried to floo here, but was met by Kreacher who lied to him, telling him Sirius truly was trapped, which led him to London. According to the badges they received upon arriving at the Ministry, they were there for over an hour before we arrived. They made their way to the Department of Mysteries, more specifically to the Hall of Prophecies. After arriving at the spot Harry



believed his Godfather to be, they found only Death Eaters waiting for them.”

“According to Ms. Granger, Harry was taunting both Lucius Malfoy and Bellatrix Lestrange in order to stall for help before pulling over a nearby shelf causing a distraction. At this point all the kids ran and scattered, so I only have bits and pieces of the actually fighting and chase that led to the Death Chamber. But when our first Order members arrived, the Death Eaters had Mssr.’s Potter and Longbottom engaged in fighting. There was a fight between those of you in the Order and the Death Eaters were our own Sirius Black was thrown through the “Veil of Death” by none other than his cousin, Bellatrix Lestrange.”

“It was at this point I arrived, and Bellatrix fled with Harry right behind her. After helping to subdue the remaining Death Eaters, I followed Harry up into the atrium where he had been dueling with Mrs. Lestrange, but Voldemort had just arrived before me. We dueled for a few minutes before he possessed Harry, and tried to get me to kill him and Mr. Potter. He was however unsuccessful as I’ve said, when I did not attack and Mr. Potter expelled him from his body and mind. It was at this point that Minister Fudge and several other Ministry employees began to show up, and Voldemort fled with Bellatrix,” Dumbledore finished tiredly, hoping that nobody would notice the lack of mention of the Prophecy with all the other information he out into the story.

Everyone around the room was in shock and sat with wide glazed eyes, and in some cases mouths gaping open. Arthur Weasley was one of the first to regain control and ask a question that was plaguing him.

“I thought Harry’s visions were pretty accurate, what was the difference between the one he had of me versus Sirius’?” he asked with a solemn face at the mention of their fallen friend.

“It’s only speculation on my part Arthur, as I’ve discussed with Harry, but his scar serves as a connection between him and Voldemort. Harry has told me that he often could feel Voldemort’s emotion or get glimpses through his eyes when he was especially angry or happy. I

believe that more recently, Voldemort became aware of this connection, which is why I've had Harry start learning Occlumency before Voldemort started using this connection to his advantage, which it now appears that he has," replied Dumbledore to the silent crowd of witches and wizards gathered around him.

"Occlumency, but he's too young," exclaimed a very worried Molly Weasley, as she thought about the little boy she had grown to love as one of her own over the last five years.

"Molly, there is no such thing as too young to learn to defend yourself, especially for Harry," replied the scarred and twitchy ex-Auror, who turned towards their leader sitting on his left. "Are you teaching him, Albus?"

"Unfortunately that could not be arranged, Severus has been teaching Mr. Potter," Dumbledore replied.

"SNAPE?" yelled Remus Lupin and several others that knew how much Harry, or anybody for that matter hated the Slytherin Potions Master.

"Severus is a highly skilled Occlumens and Legilimens, and is more than capable of the task," Dumbledore spoke in a tone as to drop the subject immediately.

Everyone seemed to quiet down at once at the tone of Dumbledore's last statement, everyone except one. His jaw was clenched tightly, and his steel grey eyes locked on the Potions Master with an absolute hatred and rage bubbling to the surface before it erupted at the smug smirk on Snape's greasy face.

"THEY HATE EACH OTHER!" roared Lupin jumping to his feet, and breathing heavy as he glared daggers at Snape and Dumbledore. The room quickly erupted into a frenzied circus, as most people shouting and yelling in support of the werewolf. The animosity between Snape and the Potters was legendary, and most members of the Order knew of the reciprocal loathing between the two. Dumbledore stood, quickly recognizing the unrest in the room and shouted a loud silence.

At once, all noise came to an abrupt end, as every eye starred at the most powerful wizard of their age, and control returned to the meeting. Lupin and Snape were still glaring at each other with immense hatred on their faces, but quieted none the less at Dumbledore's command.

"This is getting us nowhere, Remus, Severus. Please sit down," Dumbledore finished as he waited for the two former enemies to sit before joining them in his own chair at the head of the large wooden table. "Are there any more questions about the Department of Mysteries battle, before we move on to other matters?" Dumbledore asked heavily to everyone around the kitchen of Grimmauld Place.

"How were the children able to fly thestrals from Hogwarts to London, or get into the Ministry unnoticed and end up at the Department of Mysteries?" asked a red-faced and worried Molly Weasley.

"Mr. Potter's resourcefulness is quite incredible Molly, it may even surpass your twins' or the Marauder's, Remus," replied Albus Dumbledore with the familiar twinkle returning to his warm blue eyes.

"What happened to Harry, after he was possessed?" asked a still somewhat angry Remus Lupin, this was no time for niceties in his mind, he wanted answers, and he knew Dumbledore knew a lot more than he was letting on.

"He was exhausted, confused, and angry. I made him a port-key to return him to my office at Hogwarts where he awaited my return. It was after my return that he managed to destroy a great deal of the many items filling up my office," replied Dumbledore trying to keep the mood light and not further upset Remus, he could still see the questions in his grey eyes lingering beneath the surface searching for answers. He nodded slightly to the werewolf, which Remus took as a sign that some of his questions would have to wait to be discussed more privately.

"Very well ..." said Dumbledore after a short pause fell upon the group, "... this meeting of the Order of Phoenix is now over, I thank you all for your time and efforts. Would everyone who has received a

letter from Gringotts today, please stay behind for a few minutes, and Alastor, can you join us as well?"

At these words almost everyone got out of their seats and exited the kitchen quickly, talking excitedly amongst themselves. Alastor Moody and Albus Dumbledore sat near the head of the table and were joined by Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, Remus Lupin, and Nymphadora Tonks all looking rather nervous and uncertain as to what was coming next.

"Have you all been summoned to Gringotts at 10am on Friday the 14th of July?" asked Dumbledore as he looked at the four adults for confirmation, and after receiving small nods continued. "The will reading of Sirius Black has been scheduled, and Harry also will be receiving his summons tonight. Although I fear for his safety, I am allowing Harry to attend, but would like you three ..." he said as he pointed to Tonks, Lupin, and Moody, "... to act as Harry's guard for the trip."

"You're allowing Harry to attend, Albus? It's his right to be there!" spoke Lupin more forcefully than any of the others had ever seen the usually mild mannered werewolf speak, especially towards Albus Dumbledore.

"He is still in great danger, Remus," he replied with finality in his tone that quickly ended the discussion.

"What about us, sir?" asked Arthur Weasley as he looked to the leader of the Light.

"I will be accompanying you, along with Ms. Granger and Fred, George, Ron and Ginny, who are also requested at the reading ..." replied the Headmaster evenly, "... I will be by with Ms. Granger Friday morning at 9 o'clock to escort your family to Gringotts. I would like you three to bring Harry to Gringotts via the Night Bus, muggle transportation is just too unpredictable for my liking," finished the Headmaster to a group of nodding heads. "Very well, until we meet again, I wish you all a pleasant evening."

Everyone got up to leave the old House of Black, when Remus caught Tonks' eye and motioned for her to wait so they could talk

privately. Once everyone had left the kitchen, Remus put up a silencing charm on the room and sat across from the spiky blue haired auror in front of him. Tonks didn't look good now that he got a good look at her up close. There were dark heavy bags under her eyes from lack of sleep, and her hair was not it's usually bright self, but a more depressed or sad blue. Remus immediately felt bad for his younger friend, knowing how much she must be missing her favorite cousin or only cousin that really mattered. Remus himself knew all about the pain of loss, Sirius was his last remaining best friend; he had long discounted Peter Pettigrew the rat traitor, who died to Remus Halloween night almost fifteen years ago.

"Uh ... Tonks ..." Remus began nervously not knowing exactly where to start as he opened and closed his mouth dumbly.

"Wotcher Remus," Tonks said somewhat apprehensively knowing how difficult everything must be for the last true Marauder as she gave him the smallest of smiles she could muster, which happened to be the most she had managed since that night at the Department of Mysteries.

"Tonks ... I need to ask you ... a favor," spoke Remus shyly, unsure of so much that he was stumbling over both his thoughts and his words. "It's Harry ... I'm really worried about him. You didn't see how he reacted when ... when, you know ..." choked out Remus as a single tear fell from his tired and cloudy grey eyes, he just couldn't say it, and if he did it would finally be true.

"I think I have a very good idea of how he reacted, Remus," she spoke softly as small tears began to well in her eyes and fall freely down her face as her shoulders began shaking softly from the escaping sobs.

"I don't know, Tonks. You didn't see him ... his face ... his eyes ... I've never seen anyone that hurt and angry at the same time, I'm really scared for him. He's been through too much for any one person, and he's not even sixteen yet. Merlin only knows what I was dealing with at sixteen, and it was still never this bad. He and ... S-S-Si ... Sirius shared a very special bond from before Harry was even born.

That bond has only grown an intensified over the last three years,” replied Remus wearily as he cried silently for his fallen friend.

“What do you mean? What kind of bond?” asked the still watery eyed auror in confusion?

“Before Harry was born, when James and Lily asked S-S-Sirius to be the Godfather, he found some ancient spell that would bind him as a blood guardian to Harry forever. Sirius only told me about it just last year. He said he always felt a connection with Harry, and thought that connection was what saved him in Azkaban. Then Harry not only saved Sirius’ life, but his very soul from the Dementor attack two years ago. Sirius said that everything inside of him changed that night, but he never got very specific. He mentioned a while ago, how his very feelings and emotions became more closely linked with Harry’s, and It was not until last week, did he mention anything else about it. He knew something was wrong with Harry, that’s why he was so adamant about tagging along. He said he felt almost sick with worry all day, but couldn’t really place the feeling until the fighting at the Ministry began. But I’m afraid I don’t know if he ever told Harry ... or if I should tell him ...” trailed off Remus, who suddenly became conscious of how much he was just unloading unto Tonks, who sat there wide eyed and motionless throughout his ramblings.

“An ancient binding spell? Like a blood adoption?” asked the stunned auror after a few seconds passed in absolute silence as she filtered through all the information Remus just shared with her.

“I don’t really know, I’ve never come across anything like it except supposedly Gringotts, which has used the spell for Pureblood families that have adopted or taken in,” replied Remus exhaustively, realizing that he too must look absolutely miserable and even worse than the worried auror in front of him. He hadn’t slept at all, not for even a second, since he saw the look in Harry’s eyes after Sirius fell through the veil. It was a look that haunted him whenever he closed his eyes, even to blink; the image remained ingrained in his minds eye and couldn’t be forgotten no matter how hard he tried.

“What do you want from me?” asked a nervous Tonks, not knowing where this conversation was heading.

"I was just hoping you could try and talk to Harry, next time you've got guard duty, nothing much, and not about this stuff. I just want to see how he's coping with everything," replied Remus with great concern shining through his now sparkling silver eyes. "I just don't want him trying to shut everybody out; he needs to know that there are other people who also care a great deal about him."

"Sure Remus, I'll see what I can do, although I don't know why he'd talk to me?" replied Tonks skeptically, knowing she was nobody special, and figuring that Harry wouldn't want to be around anyone right now either.

"Well, besides being very friendly and fun, you are also Sirius' cousin, and one of the few links Harry has left to his Godfather," said Remus truthfully, hoping a talk between the two could do them both some real good. "Please help me Tonks, both Sirius and Harry need our help, now more than ever."

With those final words and a nod from the young auror, both Tonks and Remus left the kitchen at Grimmauld Place and headed to their respective apartment and home.

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'Those we truly love, never really leave us. You can always find them in here ...'

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'Come on, you can do better than that ...' said Sirius after he dodged a stunner. Then he was hit with another red light and his eyes widened and his body arced and fell back very slowly through the thin veil. Her laughter echoed throughout the room filling his head in torment.

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'She killed Sirius, she killed him ... I'll KILL HER!'

‘Come out, come out, Little Harry,’ she called him in her mock baby voice. ‘What did you come after me for then? I thought you were here to avenge my dear cousin!’ ‘I AM’ shouted Harry. ‘Ah, did you love him, little baby Potter?’ ‘Crucio’ ‘Never used an unforgivable curse before, have you, boy? You need to mean the Potter! You need to really want to cause pain – to enjoy it – righteous anger won’t hurt me for long – I’ll show you how it is done, shall I? I’ll give you a lesson – Crucio’

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‘I have nothing more to say to you Potter, you have irked me too often, for too long. AVADA KEDAVRA!’

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And then Harry’s scar burst open. He knew he must be dead; it was pain beyond imagining, pain past endurance – he was locked in the coils of a creature with red eyes – fused together – beyond pain. He was standing in front of Dumbledore in the atrium of the Ministry of Magic. A snake was wrapping itself around his insides, squeezing out his very life, controlling his body and taunting Dumbledore. ‘Kill me now, Dumbledore ... If death is nothing, Dumbledore, kill the boy ...’ Let the pain stop it’s killing me. Let him kill us ... Let it end ... death is nothing compared to this ... and I’ll get to see Sirius again ...

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Harry was frozen, locked, looking into the snake-like cold red eyes of his arch enemy, Lord Voldemort. There was nothing else, only two pairs of eyes staring holes into the other. The evil crimson one’s were ablaze with absolute hatred and spitting with power and destruction; while the bright emerald eyes shimmered with a pure love and painful loss while radiating an unmatched intensity. ‘You are weak Potter, you couldn’t even save your godfather ... another person you love has left you, abandoned you, you are all alone again ... and soon you to will join those pathetic scum who succumbed to death. I will destroy you and everyone you have ever cared about, you will be completely abandoned by everyone you have ever loved ... you will watch as everyone you have ever cared for is killed before you ...



and it will all be your fault,” hissed the high-pitched snake-like voice of the most feared dark wizard ever to walk the earth, “CRUCIO.”

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“NOOOO,” screamed Harry as he quickly sat up in bed sweating and breathing heavily.

It was pitch black, and he knew immediately that it was very late, and he was still stuck in his bedroom at Privet Drive. The dreams kept playing over again even in his now conscious mind, but the closing words of Voldemort left him even more devastated than he already was. Everyone he loved had died, left him all alone, he was already destroyed. It was his own fault that everyone around him was in danger, that those he loved, and who loved him were targets, and those targets had almost all been eliminated, leaving Harry feeling completely alone, helpless, and abandoned. An angry hoot broke Harry’s internal reverie, and he quickly looked up to see Hedwig sitting on his windowsill skeptically investigating a very regal looking yet unfamiliar hawk-owl, with an official looking letter attached to it’s leg.

END

## Chapter 2

“Hedwig,” yelled a startled and sweaty Harry with a raspy sore throat, “what’s going on?”

Hedwig gave a dignified hoot to Harry before glancing at the dark brownish-grey hawk owl, and then taking off to Harry’s desk with a package still attached to her feet. Harry immediately recognized Ron’s handwriting on the top-most letter, and relieved Hedwig of her burden but set aside the stuff from his friends until he solved the question of the mystery owl. The hawk-owl was very professional, and not at all affectionate, as he stood like a statue as Harry removed the letter. Once free, the large hawk-owl took back off into the night without a second glance at the letter’s recipient.

Once Harry turned over the letter, he knew something was wrong. When had they ever had to write to him? He quickly broke the seal that he now recognized as belonging to the Goblin bank, Gringotts. He unfolded the short letter and began reading quietly.

Dear Mr. Potter,

Your presence is requested at Gringotts Bank in London on Friday the 14th of July at Ten o’clock am. The reading of the Last Will and Testament of Sirius Orion Black, will be taking place at this time, and all beneficiaries are required to attend to stake their claim. We look forward to meeting with you Mr. Potter, despite the unfortunate circumstances, and wish you well.

Sincerely,

Ragnok

Director of Gringotts

Harry stared blankly at the letter from Gringotts for what felt like hours but was probably only a minute or two. Quickly, silent tears seeped through his tired eyes. He still couldn’t forget the dream he was just woken from, and now this.

He didn't want any of Sirius' money, he just wanted him back. The letter from Ragnok was like a hammer to his chest striking him with blow after blow, taunting him of his failure to save the closest thing he ever remembered to being family. The words of Voldemort taunting him in his dreams came back hauntingly. Another person you love has left you, abandoned you, you are alone again.

Harry's pain and guilt increased exponentially and he fell back into his bed sobbing uncontrollably. Painful, deep, guttural sobs broke out as the loss of Sirius crushed his spirit and made him feel empty, like a large part of him had gone missing and couldn't be refilled. He for once didn't hold it back, and let everything come out. The pain was unbearable, the guilt churned and ripped at his chest and stomach, shortening his breath, almost choking him as cramps and convulsions erupted from his stomach and throughout his entire body.

He had never felt this guilty, unclean, and bad, as images of his past kept flashing before his eyes, playing on his mind like a series of Shakespearean Tragedies stuck on repeat. His sobs continued to shake his body heavily as they became even more labored despite the lack of tears that were long dried up and overspent. Everyone he loved was gone, first his parents and now his godfather. Almost as if it was calling him, Harry quickly jumped out of bed and found what he wanted, no needed. He returned to the bed and opened the beautiful photo album that Hagrid had given him after his first year at Hogwarts, and immediately stopped dead in his tracks.

Looking up at him from the photo of their wedding day, were two of the happiest faces he could ever remembered seeing. The young man with his black messy hair, soft brown eyes, and strong build looked up smiling at the crying wizard that looked so much like him. The young woman, with her beautiful long red hair and trim figure in her gorgeous white wedding dress, gazed happily up at the crying boy who shared her striking emerald eyes. Then Harry spotted the third figure in the portrait laughing happily while winking mischievously to his best friend, the man in the photo next to him. His handsome face snapped up to look at the crying young man, his dark almost black shaggy hair tamed, his dark eyes alive with joy.

Harry sat on his bed in a complete fog, staring unblinkingly at the three people in the photograph for who knew how long, struck dumb he was overwhelmed with more pain, grief, and guilt. He could hear and feel a pounding like a big drum being beaten in a slow methodical rhythm. Very slowly, everything else around him faded away into nothingness as he began to focus on the heavy pulsating rhythm deep within his chest. At first he thought it was his heart beating or breaking and trying to explode, but then, he wasn't so sure.

The pounding steadily grew in volume and speed into an intense crescendo, until Harry could feel it escaping his body like tidal waves crashing out from within his very being. Harry embraced the powerful pulsating and rhythmic feelings, anything was better than how he had just felt moments before. The pulsating only continued to increase until Harry's breathing grew heavier and turned into deep gasps for air as sweat began dripping down his forehead over his uncharacteristically calm scar.

The waves of energy were crashing one right on top of the other, and Harry's body was reaching its physical limitations quickly from lack of food and sleep. He tried to hold on to the pulsating feeling crashing through him, relishing the releasing almost cleansing feelings, but knew he would collapse at any second. And with one final high powered crescendo, Harry collapsed.

"Oww! Ger' off," Harry yelled as he sat up in bed flailing his arms and legs at his attacker, who hooted and nipped him hard on his arm with its sharp beak. He immediately remembered what had happened, and knew it was still very recent, because he could still feel a lingering pulse of palpable magic reverberating quietly in his bedroom. He was still sweaty and short of breath, but sat up in time to avoid another owl attack. As soon as he spotted the letter attached to the bird's leg, he knew what it was, and couldn't believe it. With a trembling hand, he reached out and removed the owl's burden, before it took off immediately. With shaking hands, he slit open the letter that resembled the one he got when Dobby, the House-Elf had visited him before his second year at Hogwarts, and read.

Dear Mr. Potter,

We indicated that accidental magic of an unknown kind was performed at your residence in Little Winging. We are sending an auror to investigate the magic you performed and confiscate your wand. This is your second offense of underage magic, and actions will be taken immediately by the Ministry.

Sincerely,

Mafalda Hopkirk

Improper Use of Magic Office

“Shite,” mouthed a stunned Harry, “what did I do?”

Almost as if to answer his question, a flash of flames erupted in the center of his room, before it yielded to Fawkes, Dumbledore’s brilliant red and gold phoenix. He flew to Harry’s shoulder with a short note held in its powerful beak.

Harry,

Don’t move, don’t surrender your wand. I’ll be right there.

Albus

“Oh, Fuck. This is just great!” screamed Harry oblivious to the waking sounds of his walrus of an uncle, as he began grabbing all of his things and throwing it haphazardly into his school trunk as he waited for what would happen next.

“What’s the meaning of this, BOY-“ yelled Uncle Vernon as he was rampaging down the hallway towards the door to Harry’s room, when the doorbell interrupted his tirade, “Who could that be, at this hour?” he mused to himself as he descended the stairs heavily to answer the front door.

Harry resigned himself to sitting on his now packed school trunk with his wand safely tucked away in his pant’s waistband, awaiting the auror and Dumbledore to come. The growing feeling of dread that his wand would be snapped, and that he would be expelled from

Hogwarts suddenly became very real as he counted down probably his last few moments as a wizard.

Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts sat at his still slightly disheveled desk, with a few recently repaired trinkets sitting peacefully about him as he thought about the coming war and the Order meeting he had just come from. All of a sudden, he was interrupted from his thoughts as one of the large silver instruments on his desk flashed a dark black once, then twice, and so on until it began flashing dangerously at an ever increasing pace. Dumbledore knew immediately that something was terribly wrong at Privet Drive.

This particular sensor had only activated three times in the last five years since it was attuned to Harry's magical signature in his first year. The first instance happened before Harry's second year began, when the house-elf Dobby used a levitation charm. The second occurred in the summer before his third year, when Harry's accidental magic got the better of him and he blew up his 'Aunt Marge' into a balloon. The third happening just last summer when the Dementors showed up in Little Whinging and Harry was forced to defend himself and his muggle cousin by casting the Patronus Charm.

The detector in the past had just flashed a light blue in the first instance, light red in the second, and pure white twice last summer before it began to hum lightly. Now however it flashed jet black at a rapidly increasing rate almost like a muggle strobe light, and was humming so loudly that it threatened to shatter the small silver globe. Even more surprising was another glass instrument that lay next to the flashing magical detector globe, which had only flashed a cloudy gray at the first pulse of the original globe before breaking completely, leaving the Headmaster to be unsure of the spell or spells being performed by Harry Potter.

Dumbledore quickly stood from his desk knowing he had to find out what was happening and quickly before the Ministry, and more importantly Cornelius Fudge got too involved. He made his way towards his fireplace, when it flashed green and the head of the young auror and tonight's guard, Nymphadora Tonks, appeared among the green flames looking quite shaken up.

“Dumbledore ...somethings happened ...Harry is ...releasing some sort of ...magical pulses ...but there isn't ...anyone here ...he's alone in his room ...I see a Ministry Owl ...heading this way,” stated Tonks between continuing pulses of magical energy coming from Harry, several houses away. “Ummfpt ...what was that?” she finished as the strongest of the pulsating waves racked through her weakened frame, before they ended all together, leaving both to worry about what happened.

“Stay out of sight Nymphadora in case the Ministry sends someone, I'm going to the Ministry now to try and head them off,” replied the aged Headmaster quickly with a somber expression on his heavily lined face.

Nymphadora Tonks' head disappeared from the fire as Dumbledore scribbled a quick note to Harry to let him know not to panic, and that he would be coming to help, and gave it to his trusted phoenix, Fawkes to deliver immediately. He then went to the empty fireplace and threw in a pinch of Floo powder and called out clearly, “Amelia Bones' Office, Head of Magical Law Enforcement.”

He stepped out of the fireplace and into a warm cozy office with hard wood floors and many bookcases filled to the brink of collapse scattered around the walls. A large oak desk stood in prominence, which at the moment sat its owner, Amelia Bones, while in front of it sat the very person he had hoped to see. The middle aged woman with gray hair pulled into a tight bun, was none other than Mafalda Hopkirk of the Improper Use of Magic Office, and the one who would have monitored the Ministries many detector globes.

“Albus Dumbledore, to what do I owe this pleasure?” Amelia asked curiously, all the while having a pretty good hunch as to why the Leader of the Light would be in her office well past one in the morning.

“Ah, Director Bones, Madam Hopkirk, always a pleasure,” the old wizard spoke with a smooth calming voice and a slight bow towards the two women. “I have come on behalf of Mr. Potter.”

“Really? I was just going to call in Kingsley Shacklebolt and send him to investigate and then collect Mr. Potter and his wand for

questioning?" she replied matter-of-factly, watching Dumbledore for his reaction which of course remained stoic and unflinching.

"Would you allow me to accompany Mr. Shacklebolt, Mr. Potter may be in need of a friendly face in his corner right now?" he asked politely while paying careful attention to the two witches who were watching him skeptically.

"Well ...we would like to know what kind of magic he performed, perhaps you could assist us in that respect?" asked Amelia straightly.

"I would like to get the answer to that question as well Director," he replied honestly.

"It destroyed our globe for the boy, and none of the regional or other sensors could tell what type of spell was cast, only that it registered on his magical signature detector globe," supplied Madam Hopkirk in her curt and no-nonsense voice, entering the discussion for the first time since Dumbledore arrived.

"As it did mine Madam," replied Dumbledore politely.

"Very well, you may accompany Mr. Shacklebolt to help investigate what spells were cast, but I want Mr. Potter brought here. Nobody outside this office knows anything of what happened tonight, and I'd like to keep it that way until I get to the bottom of this," commanded Amelia Bones with a sense of great authority and need for justice or at least understanding.

Dumbledore simply nodded his head as Kingsley Shacklebolt arrived into his boss' office. After filling him in on what was happening, he and Dumbledore took the floo to the Ministry apparating sight before popping off to Privet Drive only a few feet away from the stationed Order guard, Nymphadora Tonks.

"Professor, Kingsley, thank the gods you're here," spoke the young auror in a worried and still shaky voice.

"Tonks, what happened?" asked Kingsley to his auror partner and friend as he began following Dumbledore towards Number Four,



cautiously due to the lingering feel of magic in the air that gave him the creeps.

"I don't really know, there were these like pulsating waves of magic coming from his room ...it was awful," she replied still shakily.

"What did the magic feel like?" asked Dumbledore as they neared the house.

"Sort of like a Dementor only not cold at all. It came in ever increasing waves, and I just felt so much pain, grief, and guilt. I couldn't tell if it was mine or not, but it felt so real ...and powerful ...like tidal waves," she finished somewhat winded, but pleased that she was able to do some justice in describing the horrible feelings that were just now starting to leave her.

"Stay here, Tonks," spoke Kingsley importantly, "Let's get moving Albus."

The two wizards walked up the driveway and rang the doorbell to Number Four Privet Drive, both anxious and worried at what they might find within. The door eventually opened to an enormous walrus like man with blonde hair and a thick comb mustache, his beady eyes immediately widened at the sight of his two late night guests.

"I will not have anymore of your kind in my house," yelled Vernon Dursley threateningly at the two wizards as he attempted to slam the door in their taken aback faces. Albus was the first to react, sticking out his hand and catching the door with a strength that belied his age.

"We are very sorry Mr. Dursley, but we must speak with Harry, it is a matter of great importance," replied Dumbledore very calmly and politely, trying to reassure the angry man.

"Fine," snapped Vernon as he remembered that he had two oddly dressed freaks at his doorstep that he wouldn't want the neighbors to see. "But be quick about it."

The two wizards entered the house cautiously, and followed the large beefy man up the stairs to the bedrooms. He began fumbling with a

heavy set of keys as he began unlocking the several locks on his nephew's door before finishing with a huff and storming off to his own bedroom without a backwards glance. Dumbledore and Kingsley exchanged stunned looks at the sight of the locks and cat-flap, and the eldest of the two immediately realized the grievous mistakes he had made regarding Harry's care.

The two adult wizards slowly entered the smallest bedroom and immediately took notice of the rickety desk and chair along the back wall, the old broke-down wardrobe by the door, and the small and flimsy looking bed in the corner. The room was otherwise completely bare, nothing out on the floor or desk, nothing on any of the walls, only a lone teenager sitting on his school trunk at the end of his bed clutching the two letters he received and eyeing his visitors skeptically.

"Harry is everything alright?" asked a very concerned and saddened old Headmaster as he watched the boy carefully.

"That depends on how you define alright, sir," spoke Harry hoarsely as he stared back at his Headmaster unflinchingly, making the older wizard nervous due to the horrible feelings of the darkest of magic that still lingered in the small bedroom.

"What happened? Are you hurt?" interrupted Kingsley trying to ease the growing tension in the room, and also stop the starring contest he was witnessing.

"I'm fine," replied Harry shortly as he finally looked over to find a wide eyed and nervous looking auror, "and I don't really know what happened, I was hoping one of you could tell me."

"Oh...", paused Kingsley unsure himself of what had happened as he turned to find Albus already beginning to run through a long series of wand movements and whispered incantations in the dense air of the small bedroom, and joined him.

"I can sense the residual magic without even doing the spells, but I cannot determine what kind of spell would have caused this," replied Albus quietly after a few short minutes of running tests.

"There are two magical signatures, one is really faint that matches Potter's, the other stronger one I can't tell, Albus," spoke Kingsley in wonder, as he looked to the Leader of the Order despite this being an assignment for the DMLE.

"Let me check it," replied Dumbledore, as he began the spell only to pale immediately, "...it's Tom's."

"What!" shouted Harry, as Kingsley stared between them with a look of understanding and horror on his face?

"That is, or was Tom's magic, Harry," spoke Albus softly, trying to calm the younger wizard.

"Albus, I think we should get back, Bones is waiting on us," spoke Kingsley as he looked all around him somewhat nervously.

"Harry, Director Bones has asked us to bring you to her office. If you cooperate, she has promised to keep Minister Fudge completely out of this and settle it between us, she does not want to see you expelled or in jail" spoke Dumbledore with a placating tone hoping to reassure the young wizard that nothing too bad would happen.

"Okay," was all Harry replied as he got up and fixed his Headmaster with his intense green eyes, wondering what kind of strings he had to pull to swing this?

"Here Harry," said Kingsley as he handed the young wizard a large skeleton key which all three wizards grabbed.

The familiar tug of the port-key instantly made Harry nauseous and nervous as his mind once again relived the Third Task of the Tri-Wizard Tournament. He landed with a stagger inside a warm and cozy office, with a familiar yet formidable looking witch sitting expectantly behind her desk, and another of to the room's side. Three wooden chairs appeared before the new arrivals into the office, and they each took their seats, cautiously in some cases.

"Mr. Potter, thank you for coming," began Madam Amelia Bones, looking exactly as she had during Harry's Wizengamot hearing the previous year. "We would like to know what spells you performed at your residence this evening?"

"Spells?" asked a still confused Harry, "I already told them that I didn't use any spells, I don't even know what happened."

"We have proof Mr. Potter," interrupted the strict looking witch with grey hair near the quietly contemplating Professor Dumbledore. "Our magical sensors on both you and Little Whinging indicated spell after spell firing in increasing frequency for almost a full minute until it destroyed those sensors beyond repair. We demand to know what spells you used."

"I already said I didn't use any spells, I didn't even have my wand with me," replied Harry exasperatedly.

"What do you mean you didn't have your wand?" stared Madam Bones, "then could it have been accidental or even wandless magic?"

"I guess it could have been accidental, because I wasn't trying to do anything," replied a confused and now a little scared Harry. "I haven't used my wand since school, honest."

"Kingsley can you check Mr. Potter's wand with the *priori incantatem*, so we have that on record," announced Madam Bones, making Harry nervous about how many spells they could or would go back.

"Your wand, Mr. Potter ...don't worry, you will get it back."

Harry handed his wand very slowly and almost unwillingly over to Kingsley who performed the spell only once, and found to everyone except Harry's surprise, a glamour charm. After making a notation of it in a file on her desk, Madam Bones looked over the two wizards who went to collect Mr. Potter for there interpretation of the events, "Albus, Kingsley, what do you think?"

"Director, if I may," started Dumbledore as he began rummaging around in his large cloak before pulling out something very familiar to

the office's occupants. "Could we perhaps ask Harry to view his memory of tonight's 'episode'? I think that would give us a much better understanding than anything I could provide through mere speculation at this time."

"Is that alright with you Mr. Potter?" asked Madam Bones as she gazed questioningly at the Boy-Who-Lived and his startling green eyes.

"Yes Ma'am, but I don't know how," answered Harry nervously as he ducked his head in slight embarrassment.

"Just think of your memory of tonight, as much as you can, what you were doing before it happened. When you're ready, Kingsley will extract it, don't worry it doesn't hurt," spoke Madam Bones comfortingly, curious as to what the poor boy had gone through that stumped Albus as well.

Harry did as instructed and watched as Kingsley touched the tip of his wand to Harry's temple, extracting a long spindly silvery substance and placed it into the empty Pensieve on the desk before them. Once it was deposited, they all stood up and gathered around the ancient runic carved Pensieve and each touched a finger to the flowing silvery surface, upending them and bringing them into the memory of the fifteen year old Boy-Who-Lived.

They were deposited into the smallest bedroom of Privet Drive, to see a relatively barren room occupied by a lone figure thrashing about on the bed, captured in the throws of a nightmare. Within seconds, a large Eagle-Owl from Gringotts descended into the room through the lone window, causing Harry's own Snow-Owl to begin hooting and finally nipping on her owner's fingers to wake him. Waking with a start, the sweaty, pale faced boy fumbled for his glasses wondering what had woken him when he spotted the unfamiliar owl.

After a quick read of the letter, Harry collapsed into gut wrenching sobs that shook his whole body. For a full minute he laid in bed crying uncontrollably, until all of a sudden he jumped up out of bed and after a quick search through his trunk pulled out a worn photo album and

sat back down on his bed, staring with watery eyes at the album's first page.

A very short amount of time passed while staring at the photo album, crying openly, causing the spectators in the Pensieve to glance at one another apprehensively at what they were witnessing or supposed to be seeing. Then something none of them had ever seen happened to the crying boy, a faded flash of light illuminated his image seemingly from inside his body for only a split second and then disappeared. Immediately the four adults in the room gasped in surprise and turned to look at the real Harry standing quietly, watching the scene play out in front of him with red-rimmed eyes and a heavy heart.

Then there was another flash, this one a little brighter, then another, and another. Each flash was growing stronger and brighter than the last, and they were slowly growing in frequency that they were beginning to occur almost on top of one another. The light was a bright white, with tiny bits of dark black on the edges, and grew to such strength that the viewers of the scene had to shield their eyes to avoid the intensity. The flashes were happening so fast that the image of Harry collapsed on the bed seemed to be clothed in the white glow of whatever was happening to the young wizard. Then suddenly there was a large flash, more powerful than all the others, and when they blinked the spots out of their eyes, the image of Harry grew dark as the young wizard collapsed into unconsciousness.

"I woke up a few minutes later when your owl arrived with that letter for underage magic," spoke the real Harry into the darkness right before they were all lifted out of the Pensieve and deposited back into Madam Bones' cozy office.

Harry still didn't know what happened, and judging by the looks on most of the adult's faces, they didn't have a clue either, and that it couldn't be good. After a long pause, the silence was finally broken by Amelia Bones, who seemed the first to recover from the shock at the scene they all just witnessed.

"What exactly was that? Albus, do you have any better ideas now?" she asked in a quiet voice, but filled with awe and a little fear.

"I'm not exactly sure..." replied Albus Dumbledore who seemed to be deep in thought as he prepared what to say next.

"I believe that the letter young Harry received at the beginning was a summons to Gringotts, am I correct?" he asked as he turned to Harry who simply nodded, trying to avoid the penetrating gaze of the Headmaster.

"The photo album from Hagrid with a picture of your parent's wedding day?" another nod in reply.

"What are you getting at Albus?" asked a still very shaken and confused Mafalda Hopkirk.

"I am simply trying to understand things more clearly, Mafalda," replied Albus as he paused momentarily, deciding how to reveal what Tonks had described happening at the scene. "At the moment, I have a guard watching young Mr. Potter at Privet Drive. Upon Kingsley and my arrival, she described feelings of great pain, grief, and guilt hitting her like tidal waves in an increasing pattern and intensity. It does fit with the pulsating light we witnessed coming forth from young Mr. Potter, which also grew in both speed and intensity."

"My earlier questions," continued Dumbledore after a slight pause to let them assimilate everything he said, "were to determine what Mr. Potter was thinking of or feeling when the light show began. If I am correct, the letter from Gringotts, summoned Harry to the Will Reading of his late godfather, and the photo album's picture is one not only of his parents, but also their best man, the same godfather who has just recently left us, Sirius Black," finished Dumbledore sadly as he looked at Harry struggling to hold back the tears that were starting to fall.

"SIRIUS BLACK," yelled Mafalda Hopkirk, the only adult that seemed surprised at that bit of information. "He's a murderer!"

"NO HE WASN'T," screamed Harry as he jumped to his feet, drew his wand, and spun in a lightening fast motion before anyone even realized what was happening.

His wand was pointed right between the eyes of the strict grey haired witch in a flash of a second as he stared at her with an utter rage tearing through his body. Mafalda let out a tiny squeak and cowered deeper into her chair as her eyes remained frozen in fear, staring at the most intense emerald eyes sparkling with an unholy rage, piercing her very soul.

“Harry!” yelled the two men that had brought him earlier as they jumped to their feet with wands drawn and at the ready as they struggled to get between Harry and the scared witch.

The room was filled with a raw power, radiating off of the young wizard in front of them that terrified even Dumbledore. Harry caught a quick glance at the three other wands pointed at him, and slowly lowered his wand from the frightened witches face, but continued to stare at her for several seconds before breaking the very tense silence that permeated the room.

“You will NOT insult Sirius Black in front of ME. Don’t speak of something that you know NOTHING ABOUT!” hissed Harry in a cold voice that left chills in the air, and forced the terrified witch to whimper at the intimidating young man in front of her.

Harry calmly and slowly retook his seat, looking at the floor and trying to take deep calming breaths. When he looked up at the faces of those around him and the wands still pointed at him, he realized he had made a terrible mistake.

“I’m sorry ...you can lower your wands,” he finally choked out as his suppressed emotions of rage and anger came flooding out as guilt and remorse, and he buried his head in his hands to hide his falling tears from the adults watching him .

“Harry? ...” asked Dumbledore kindly, after a long silence where the adults returned to their seats and settled down, and the young boy continued to cry silently. “Could you please tell us what you were feeling back at Privet Drive?” hoping to get back to the topic at hand, but still very conscious of the younger wizards emotional instability.



"I ...I-I felt ...g-guilty ...it's my fa-fault ...th-they're all d- ... dead," whispered Harry in a broken voice between sobs that racked his entire body. "I-I just wanted that ...that feeling to go away ...I started to focus on my heartbeat, or ...I thought it was my heart beat ...but it just kept getting faster and louder until I-I ...I couldn't breathe ...and then I just passed out. I didn't even know there was light coming off me."

"Harry," began Albus pleadingly, "please listen to me, it is not your fault. You did not kill them, Tom did. Please Harry, you must believe me, you must put that guilt behind you, and put the blame on those it truly belongs. I care too much for you to see you hurting so."

"Mr. Potter, I agree with Albus here," spoke Madam Bones sadly as she watched the broken teenager and her heart went out to him for what he has suffered through. "I also do not feel that punishment is in order. While magic was indeed performed, I find it completely unintentional, and am willing to send you home with only a warning to be more careful in controlling your emotions."

"Thank you, Madam Bones," replied Harry in a very small but polite voice as he tried to better compose himself and clean his tear stained face.

"You may also want to thank my niece Susan the next time you see her. If she hadn't always spoken so highly of you over the years, I might be more inclined to get to the bottom of this mess," she stated matter-of-factly with a small warm grin playing at the corners of her lips. "On an entirely different matter, Mr. Potter, I was wondering if you would be willing to testify at the upcoming trials of the Death Eaters you faced at the Ministry three weeks ago. We will be trying them together in a few weeks time, and a few of them, which I am sure you are aware of, carry a great deal of influence, and without hard evidence and testimonies, it will be difficult to convict some of them."

"Malfoy," Harry stated blankly, knowing entirely too well to whom she was referring, and already starting to feel a burning deep in his body that demanded justice of some kind.

"Yes among others," she replied to Harry with a respectful grin at the apparently quite intelligent young wizard.

"Anything you need from me, to see that they never hurt another of my friends, you've got," replied Harry with a determined fire igniting in his formerly depressed and glassy eyes. "If you would like to view my Pensieve memory of that night, I could show you now, but I would rather not talk about it yet."

"You sure you don't mind seeing it again and showing us?" asked a concerned Amelia Bones, not believing her ears.

"I see it every time I close my eyes, once more isn't going to kill me," replied Harry sarcastically, or rather morbidly based on the looks of concern on the faces of the adults around him, as he thought of the fight that night with the now captured Death Eaters.

"Do you have the memory ready?" she asked nervously, and somewhat scared at what she would see that gave nightmares to the boy who had seen and fought Voldemort, and at his nod prompted Kingsley to extract the memory.

As soon as the memory started to play, Harry knew he didn't really want to watch the scene play out, the image of Sirius falling through the veil repeated over and over in his present mind until the sound of the shelves in the Hall of Prophecies breaking brought him back to the scene before him. Needing to focus on anything other than the final result and feeling of guilt and helplessness towards Sirius' death, Harry began focusing on and studying the memory for things he might not have seen when living it. He immediately realized his two biggest mistakes which were obvious from this position as an observer to the situation as opposed to its main participant. The first being that everyone he stunned, was later revived by other Death Eaters, and the second was that he didn't break their few wands of the enemy when he had the chance.

Watching as Hermione took the dark purple cutting curse across her chest and then collapse, Harry swore that he would never make these mistakes again, and would never lead his friends unprepared into danger again. The adults were watching the Pensieve scene with

rapt fascination at the incredible battle that was playing out, and were often gasping at various points of the memory. Soon enough, the memory was at the circular chamber that led downwards towards the raised dais and the drifting veil, causing Harry's tears to renew.

He forced himself to keep watching, he had come this far and had to come to accept what had happened if he ever wanted to survive this war. Bellatrix, in all her madness, had just dropped Tonks with a stunner, and was now fighting Harry's godfather, Sirius Black. Harry didn't need to actually watch the next few moments, they had been playing so much in his mind since it happened. He knew when it happened, because both Madam Bones and the still present Mafalda Hopkirk let out small gasps right before Harry's yelling after his fallen godfather began. The last image of the scene was of Dumbledore capturing up the remaining Death Eaters in the circular chamber, and Harry struggling in the arms of a crying Remus Lupin.

As the scene faded, and the viewers returned to their seats in the office, there was a collective releasing of breath, some for the evidence they saw, and one for the scene coming to an end where it did. Dumbledore was unsure of why Harry ended the memory there, before he went up to the atrium and met Voldemort, but knew that now was not the time to bring it up. Everyone else in the room was shocked speechless, with a varying mixture of expressions.

Amelia and Kingsley were both in awe that Harry and five other kids even survived that long against that many high level Death Eaters, while Mafalda looked terrified, having been a Fudge supporter and never believing that Voldemort and his Death Eaters were a legitimate threat. A long silence followed the viewing of the Pensieve scene, and Dumbledore seemed the only one capable of breaking it.

"I would like to note, that all five students that accompanied Mr. Potter are home safe and sound. Only Mr. Weasley and Ms. Granger needed anything more than minor care, and they were both fine by the end of term," added Dumbledore, trying to calm some of the worry in watching those particular injuries, and proving that luckily, none of the kids were permanently harmed.

"Yes ...well ...um, excuse me. Mr. Potter, I am sorry, I really had no idea. That was a bit more than I expected, but is absolutely perfect in ensuring that not a single Death Eater will walk free," finished Madam Bones as she tried to compose herself, and then give a warm smile as she caught eyes with the remarkable young wizard. "I just have one easy question Harry. Who was the group of wizards that came to your aid, and did you know any of them?"

"Um..." began Harry before looking over to Professor Dumbledore, who merely nodded for Harry to answer truthfully. "Their members of the Order of Phoenix, and yes, I knew all of them that came that night, some better than others of course."

"So Kingsley, am I to understand that two of my best aurors are part of this Order?" asked Amelia sharply to the tall black wizard who continued to look at his boss proudly and without fear.

"Yes Ma'am, Auror Tonks and I have been a part of the Order of Phoenix for over a year now. Ever since You-Know-Who was reborn last year, we have fought along side Harry and Dumbledore," finished Kingsley proudly and unashamed of his actions fighting the good fight.

"Very well, we will discuss this in a few moments, but first, I would like you and Albus to return Mr. Potter to his home, and then come back here with Ms. Tonks. All three of you will have some serious questions to answer before I will be satisfied," spoke Amelia Bones importantly, and bringing the meeting with Harry to an end as she stood up and walked over to where Harry was sitting quietly. She reached out a hand to shake and in a pleasant voice added, "I look forward to seeing you again Mr. Potter. The trials will be held near the end of July. Please take care of yourself and I will see you then."

"Thank you Madam Bones," replied Harry politely shaking the older witch's hand firmly.

Albus, Kingsley, and Harry all stood and touched the large skeleton key again, before Kingsley tapped it with his wand, and the familiar tug behind the naval signified the activation of the port-key. Harry staggered on his feet, but was supported by a steady hand on his

shoulder from Dumbledore who landed smoothly next to him in the darkness of Privet Drive.

Dumbledore steered the group towards Mrs. Figg's house, and upon arriving were met by the crazy cat lady and a nervous looking Nymphadora Tonks. Well, Harry thought it was Tonks, her hair was spiky, but it lacked the usual flair and was a depressed blue. Also she looked worn out, like she hadn't slept in weeks, and Harry instantly thought about how he must look. He hadn't slept in weeks either, not peacefully anyway. She gave Harry a small smile as he entered, but her nervousness continued to show through her projected lax exterior.

"Arabella, please keep Harry here with you until I return to get him," spoke Albus respectfully towards the old squib who had watched Harry most of his life without him even knowing until last summer.

"Harry," continued Dumbledore as he turned to the boy, "I will return shortly to bring you back to Privet Drive and fill you in on what is happening. I must say, I am not happy with your treatment from the Dursleys, and I wished it had not digressed so poorly. Please forgive an old man, I will try to help remedy the situation soon, but for now I need you to stay under the protection of your Aunt. There will be a guard at Privet Drive at all times, so if you must leave, stay out where they can see you. I fear Voldemort is growing more and more desperate, judging by his appearance at the Ministry, and I do not want to take any unnecessary chances. I promise to keep you more informed this summer with what has been going on, but for now I must return to Madam Bones' office. I will return shortly."

"T-Thank you, sir," responded Harry honestly as he gave his Headmaster the first truly friendly smile he had since before Sirius' death.

Albus Dumbledore, Kingsley Shacklebolt, and Nymphadora Tonks grabbed the port-key that every auror carried, taking them directly to their boss' office. They reappeared in the office, to find Amelia Bones sitting comfortably behind her desk awaiting their return. She immediately motioned for them all to sit in the three empty chairs before her before she began her questions.

“First, I have sent poor Mafalda to St. Mungo’s for some calming draughts, she was having a very difficult time with everything she saw, and I felt she needed the break. I also have removed tonight’s memories from her mind, it should help her cope better, and sure up any possible information leaks,” stated Madam Bones crisply before she eyed each person in her office carefully. “Auror Tonks, I would like you to join us as we visit the memory Mr. Potter left us, I would like to view it again, now that I know what I am looking for, and I could use all the eyes we have...”

“Now... what is the story with Sirius Black,” started Bones after emerging from the Pensieve, who became startled as her youngest auror started to cry in pain, just like the boy had moments before, “I thought he was a supporter of You-Know-Who, and you Kingsley have been in charge of his capture since he escaped. Have you known where he was all this time?”

“Sirius Black, was wrongly accused, Amelia,” spoke Dumbledore with a calming grandfatherly voice, “he did not betray the Potter’s, he was not their secret keeper. It was Peter Pettigrew, an unregistered rat animagus who is still alive and serving Voldemort that betrayed James and Lily. He also framed Sirius for the murder of those fourteen poor muggles after escaping in his animagus form through the hole he blew in the street. We have several witnesses to his being alive, as well as to his confession to Harry, Sirius, and Remus Lupin.”

“Then why not try to clear his name if you had evidence and proof?” interrupted Amelia.

“Who was going to believe the word of an escaped criminal, his half-werewolf friend, or the boy the Ministry deemed deranged and unstable,” interrupted Tonks, speaking for the first time despite the tears that still fell slowly down her face, as she thought about Remus’ words to her earlier, and the look of pain on Harry’s face as Sirius fell through the veil.

“Good point,” replied Amelia as she glanced at her young auror questioningly, “and where do you stand Ms. Tonks?”

“Ma’am, Sirius is my ...was my cousin ...and a good man. I believed him, and I believe Harry and Remus too,” she replied as she tried to compose herself best she could in front of her boss, and started by whipping her face clean on her sleeve.

“Very well,” replied Amelia, “my next question, is for you Albus. What is the function or purpose of this Order of the Phoenix?”

“It is a group of wizards and witches dedicated to fight against Voldemort and his supporters. It has been around for centuries, and was instrumental in the defeat of Grundewald back in the forties, and was restarted during Voldemort’s first reign and again last year after his rebirth,” replied Dumbledore plainly, not afraid at this point to tell Amelia the truth, she was always someone they had hoped to have recruited to join.

“What then does this Order have to do with Harry Potter?” she asked trying to find the connection and also why Dumbledore was always so interested in the boy some called, The Chosen One.

“Whether any of us want it to be this way, I seriously doubt: but nonetheless, Mr. Potter is Voldemort’s greatest adversary,” spoke Dumbledore sadly. “He destroyed his body as a baby, he thwarted attempts to regain that body twice at the ages of eleven and twelve, he escaped Him and His Death Eaters at his rebirth over a year ago, and just again three weeks ago. It is safe to say that Harry has been a perpetual thorn in the side of Voldemort, and is therefore still very much a target and at risk, especially over the summers, away from the protection of Hogwarts, and without the ability to use magic. That is the reason that we have kept a guard stationed at Privet Drive, to answer your next question.”

“Am I correct in assuming then that Auror Tonks was on guard duty tonight?” asked Amelia turning towards her youngest auror questioningly.

“Yes ma’am,” replied Tonks proudly.

“Very well,” started Amelia with a small smile on her face as she glanced at the no longer crying metamorphmagus. “Albus, do you

know why the memory ended there; you have already said that he again fought and escaped V-V-Vol ...You-Know-Who that night, I was kind of hoping to see it?"

"Ah, I wondered that myself Amelia," replied Albus in apparent deep thought, "perhaps the memory ended with the capture of the Death Eaters, because it is they who are on trial, or maybe he was too upset, angry, or ashamed of what happened and did not care to revisit it..."

"When I showed up," continued Albus after a short pause, "Harry was standing with his wand to his side, only meters in front of both Bellatrix and Voldemort himself. The first thing I saw was a killing curse being sent at him, which I was able to block thanks to the statues of Magical Brethren. I began fighting Voldemort after subduing Bellatrix behind another statue until He possessed Harry, at which point I could no longer attack. Mr. Potter was able to force Voldemort out of his body and he fled with Bellatrix as other Ministry officials began arriving for the day."

"I can understand why he wouldn't want to relive that particular memory," exclaimed a shocked Amelia Bones. "He is a special boy, isn't he?"

"That he most definitely is," replied Albus, with a bright sparkle in his deep blue eyes.

"My last question is just for curiosity sake, but how did six fifth and fourth year students, even survive against a dozen of You-Know-Who's best Death Eaters?" asked Amelia, who thought she might have known the answer, after seeing how much better her niece was this year, but wanting to know more.

"Mr. Potter himself began training a select group of students this year in Defense to compensate for the lack of education they were receiving from Madam Umbridge," replied Albus with pride in his voice.

"I thought something like that. Susan wouldn't give me any details about how she improved so much with that awful woman teaching,"



answered Amelia. "I had no idea that she was being taught by Mr. Potter himself."

"And I would not expect many answers from your niece on the subject, Amelia. Every member of the group signed an enchanted paper, that will definitely discourage anyone from talking after the incident with Ms. Edgecombe," replied Dumbledore with the trademark twinkle going full force as a small smile met his lips.

"Ah yes, Marietta was not at all pleased when her daughter returned from school, and learned that St. Mungo's couldn't cure her. So that's where it came from, Potter's group?" asked an interested Amelia, having gone to school with Marietta Edgecombe and never having really got along.

"Yes, unfortunately for her, the moment she betrayed the group's confidence, she was hexed through her own signing of the paper's enchantment. A very brilliant bit of magic performed by Ms. Granger, if I do say so myself," replied Dumbledore with a small grin on his old and wrinkled face, as the other three occupants of the room held back giggles at varying degrees of success, Tonks failing the loudest.

"Well Albus, I think that will be all. I have taken care of the restriction for underage magic charge, and erased all evidence of such an event. I don't think I would have been able to if Cornelius had gotten wind of this first. For some reason, he really has it in for Mr. Potter, and I don't see his position changing any time soon. He is absolutely livid over what happened to Delores, and blames Mr. Potter exclusively for most of his troubles now. I would alert Harry of the situation he is in regards to the Minister, and I will do my best to ensure his fair treatment for as long as I can," finished Madam Bones as she stood up and reached out a hand for Dumbledore to shake, signifying the end of this particular meeting. "Ms. Tonks will be with you in several minutes."

"Thank you Director," replied Albus who left the office and walked slowly to the floo network to return to Arabella Figg's, thinking intently all the way.

He arrived minutes later into the cluttered living room of seventeen Magnolia Crescent, and greeted a tired looking Arabella watching over a ravenous Harry, eating happily away at a plate of sandwiches. Dumbledore watched the boy eat, and for the first time that night, took a good look at his favorite pupil and didn't like what he saw at all. The boy was far too skinny, and with the way he attacked that food, he realized that he was probably being starved by the Dursleys, and thinking back to his bedroom door, it was probably much worse than just that.

Several more minutes later, Tonks appeared in the living room brushing off soot, as Harry was finishing the last of the mountain of sandwiches. Tonks had a short whispered conversation with Dumbledore, while Harry took his plate to the kitchen thanking Mrs. Figg profusely. Dumbledore then relayed Amelia's warning about Minister Fudge to Harry who just kind of shrugged it off, already dreading being returned to Privet Drive.

Then Dumbledore asked if Harry would let Tonks or his guard come and talk to him everyday at lunchtime, to keep him company and up to date on any Order or Voldemort information. Although Harry knew he didn't want the company, he was slightly happy at the prospect of being included and let in on what was happening in the magical world, since most of it did affect him in some way. Harry reluctantly agreed, realizing that his Headmaster was just trying to keep his promises from the end of the year to include Harry and not keep him in the dark for which Harry was grateful, letting some of the built up anger he had felt towards the old man dissipate.

Dumbledore bid his goodbyes before leaving through the floo towards Hogwarts and another very late night of thinking and worrying. Tonks and Harry began the slow walk back to Privet Drive in the darkness and quiet of the night in relative silence. Tonks continued to give the younger wizard nervous sideways glances as they walked, while Harry just walked on steadily, never taking his eyes from his feet and the ground directly in front of him, completely unaware of the nervous auror next to him.

"Uh ...umm ...Harry? Are you okay?" she asked very timidly as she watched him closely.

"I'm fine Tonks," mumbled Harry quickly and quietly.

"Yeah right!" exclaimed Tonks loudly and disbelievingly, before her eyes widened in fear at what she said, and her hand reflexively went up to cover her mouth from saying something stupid again. "Oh ...I'm sorry Harry ...I didn't mean it like that."

Don't worry Tonks," Harry waved it off without even looking up at the stunned auror as he continued studying the path his feet were taking.

"No Harry, I really am sorry ...you don't owe me anything, I-I ...I just hope you're going to be okay," she replied sincerely while studying the teenager that had been through more than most senior aurors, including herself.

She was amazed at what she got to see in the Pensieve, and couldn't forget his resourcefulness during the fight at the Ministry, or the look on his face as Remus held him back from following Sirius through the veil. She thought back to his earlier display of power that started this whole mess, and just thinking about it brought many of those feelings of guilt and pain back full force causing shivers down her spine and the tiny hairs on the back of her neck to stand up, alert and sensitive.

The feelings made her slow her pace a little, and after a few seconds, Harry realized that the auror was no longer next to him and stole a quick glance around. He noticed her a few steps back from him, with a far away look in her cloudy and dull blue eyes, and a definite lag in her steps. She looked completely lost, just how Harry himself felt, and the bubbly spirit that normally accompanied the pretty auror seemed to be completely destroyed, unnerving Harry to no end.

"Tonks ...hey Tonks, are you okay?" he asked after he realized that she was moving so slow she had almost stopped altogether, and the look of pain and sadness on her normally happy face made his own guilt and pain double inside of him.

"What ...oh yeah ...I'm fine," she replied as she seemed to snap out of her daze and tried to catch up with him.

Harry knew that excuse all too well, having used it himself only minutes before, and knew that she was anything but fine. And then he remembered like a hammer striking him right in the torso knocking his wind out while he felt the constriction of pain in his chest. She was Sirius' cousin he thought to himself as he relived his godfather falling through the veil for the seemingly millionth time. These thoughts froze him in place as Tonks approached him slowly as he continued staring at the young auror.

"I-I'm really sorry Tonks, I-I ...I wasn't thinking," mumbled Harry as he shuffled his feet nervously and stole glances at the sad looking woman.

"You have nothing to apologize for Harry," she replied distractedly as she thought about what was bothering the younger wizard so much.

"Yes I do! It's my f-fault he's dead," he choked out as his feelings of pain intensified causing him to cry suddenly.

"WHAT?" she yelled, unable to believe the young wizard's guilt over what happened, and staring at him in shock? "It was not your fault Harry. S-Sirius knew what he was doing."

"It was my fault he was there in the first place ...and it's MY fault he died," yelled Harry uncontrollably, starting to breath heavily as his anger, guilt, and sadness began to overtake him quickly.

Deep in his chest, he could feel a distant pulsating that immediately scared him to the core, remembering what happened only a few hours ago. He took one last look at the stunned and slightly crying auror before turning and sprinting back to the front door of Privet Drive, and the solitude of his small bedroom. He dove onto the bed as his tears erupted and heavy sobs began shaking his whole body forcefully. The distant pulsating was trying to strengthen within him, but he concentrated with all his strength to suppress the growing sensations and let his tears wash away his pain and torment.

It was almost a whole hour later, when Harry woke up sweaty and stiff, with dried tears crusting on his face. Immediately, Harry remembered yelling at Tonks earlier and the hurt look on her face,

and now, if possible, he felt even worse. He no right to be angry with Tonks, along with himself and Remus, it must be hardest on her. Sirius was her blood cousin, the only non-Death Eater of her family's relatives, and now he was gone. Guilt again became Harry's most dominating emotion, guilt over the many lives ruined because of their association with him, and it tore painfully at his chest.

After sitting up in bed and finding his glasses, Harry spied a bowl of soup and piece of bread, along with a small cup of water near the cat-flap on his bedroom door. His anger immediately started to surface as he remembered being imprisoned with his 'family', but it couldn't overpower the overwhelming desire for food. So grudgingly, Harry devoured the cold broth and some of the bread, leaving the rest and some water for Hedwig, who had returned last night with the Gringotts Owl, and was sleeping quietly in her cage on the worn down wardrobe.

He knew it was still very early in the morning even before dawn, and the food was actually last night's dinner which he hadn't noticed then. He was wide awake, and still thinking over all that happened to him last night; the dream, the letter, the photo album, the pulsating magic, the meeting with Madam Bones, the Pensieve memories, and finally Tonks. His thoughts continued to spiral downward, until an angry frustrated yell escaped his lips.

"I've had enough," he screamed not caring if it woke any of the Dursleys, he just didn't care, he was at his wits end, and just wanted it all to be over.

He lay in bed wondering if he would or could ever escape the horrible life that fate had handed him, when he thought back to the Prophecy. Either must die at the hands of the other ...for neither can live while the other survives. There it was, his entire life decided down to one sentence. He would never have anything as long as Voldemort was alive, and being the only living being that could kill the Dark Lord, Harry knew his life was already forfeit.

How could a schoolboy defeat the Darkest Wizard of the age, when Dumbledore couldn't even do it? Harry had no chance, he knew, Voldemort knew it, everyone knew it. Why did people have to

continue putting themselves in danger to save him, it was pointless and useless, he was nothing special and he believed it? He couldn't even pass his classes without Hermione's help; he had no real skills, only luck when it came to escaping maniacal Dark Lords.

There was only one way he could survive, and lead a happy life, and that was to become a murderer and defeat the greatest Dark Wizard alive. Harry looked around his prison among his 'family' and began to realize that his life had never been, nor would it ever be truly happy. This was about survival plain and simple. Either He or Voldemort would survive, those were the only truths. Despite his tiredness from not having slept in weeks, Harry felt a renewed sense of energy that told him there was only one way to survive, and that was to learn and fight with everything he could.

If Voldemort won, the entire world would be doomed, if Harry won, most likely only he himself would suffer. Obviously the victims of Voldemort would suffer, but not the average witch, wizard, or muggle. Their lives would continue on as if nothing had changed, only that the weapon to defeat the Dark Lord was used correctly, and that they no longer need worry about it. It was all up to a child, a child who knew nothing but pain and loss, who had nothing and nobody to fight for, except the memories of those who loved him and died for him.

There it was, his mother, father, and now godfather, all died to protect him, knowing that it was up to him to end the tyranny they had all suffered under for so long. Harry was the only person who could stop the evil from permeating the world, and he was doing nothing to prepare for that. He could kick himself when he thought back to his first few years of school, and how lazy he was. He let luck, Dumbledore and Hermione save him from his destiny, but no longer could he put that burden on anyone other than where it belonged.

It was not fair to have anyone risk their lives for him, when he did nothing to earn their help. He had to get smarter, make better decisions, learn, study, and train with everything he had, or he was just pissing on the sacrifices of those who loved him enough to die for him. He closed his eyes for a long second, and took a deep calming inhale of stale air, allowing his body to be filled with the lifeblood of all humans. Slowly releasing that breath Harry felt the first calm wash

over him in weeks, if not ever. He knew there was only one way to win to live, and that was to fight with everything he had.

He grabbed the nearest stack of books by his bed, and immersed himself in re-reading all of his old textbooks, with a plan slowly forming in his mind. He would use this time imprisoned at Privet Drive to finally take control of his destiny. To prepare himself for what he knew was coming, and to be ready when it did.

Several hours later, his stomach let out a loud grumble of hunger, the soup having done little to sustain his energy. He remember the package he got back from Ron last night, that he threw aside in favor of the letter from Gringotts, and hoped to anyone that was listening that there was food in there. He quickly found it with a bunch of replies from his friends, which he would read later, and tore open the box to find the inside much larger and filled with a few meat pies and several plates of sandwiches.

After devouring the largest meal he had probably ever eaten at Privet Drive, Harry hid the remaining pies and sandwiches under the loose floor board, hoping that they would keep for the next day or so. He returned to his bed with a new stack of books and continued his re-reading of them with a renewed vigor as the other occupants of the house started making their first movements of the day.

AN: That's Chapter Two. I have hand written up to Chapter Twelve, but my typing is slow going...I should have Chapter Three ready to go soon, Wednesday's are good for me. Thanks to my first reviewers, they were great!

Melcangel, darthme1011, Dragen Ranger, Mellowyellow11, Aoedes Mortis, Shadow High Angel, Treck, RealityBender, Necessary-Evil, & bandqsecurtiyaw. You all made my day, and don't worry ...tis not the end.

## Chapter 3

"Get up, boy!" shouted an angry voice in the morning, snapping Harry out of his studying. "Hurry up and use the bathroom, I haven't got all day," continued the obnoxiously annoying voice of his Aunt Petunia from the now open doorway to his bedroom.

Harry must have still been tired after not sleeping much and studying for a whole day because his body was stiff, and dragged with a dead weight as if struggling mightily. He stumbled into the bathroom and a few minutes later returned to his room and his toast breakfast, before being locked in for another long day. He was still exhausted having slept less the previous two nights than any so far this summer, but now awake enough after his shower to start his day. Yesterday morning, after the pulsating incident, Harry got a letter from Dumbledore through Fawkes that the guard would not visit until tomorrow, giving him some rest, which was now today.

Glancing at his desk, his eyes fell on the letters that Hedwig brought back for him yesterday, and he quickly decided to read them despite the apprehension and worry that began creeping into his mind. He still felt very guilty for leading his friends almost to their deaths, and hoped that they all could forgive him and would still want to be friends. Ron's letter was still on top, so Harry decided to start there, knowing what his best mate thought was the best place to start, and as he opened the letter he found a smaller one from Ginny inside. He broke open and began to read his best friend's familiar tiny scrawl.

Harry,

Don't worry Harry; you're still my best mate. I don't blame you at all, so drop it.

My mum was pretty upset at first, but not at you, and besides, she's dealing with it just fine. She doesn't blame you at all and neither do the rest of us; I think she was just worried about us being so young to tell you the truth.

Ginny helped me put some food together, is your whale of a cousin still on that diet? That sucks!



Don't let the muggles get you down, and write back soon.

Ron

Dear Harry,

I don't ever want to hear you talk like that again! You got it? It's not your fault; you didn't force us to come with you. I will always be your friend, Harry. I owe you more than you will ever know, don't forget that. My family would never abandon you, you got that mister.

I hope the food helps, if you send Hedwig back occasionally, I'll keep sending you more if you want. Talk to you soon Harry, and stay safe.

Love,

Ginny

After reading the Weasley kid's letters, Harry immediately felt better. A sense of comfort swept over him as he realized the only real family he had ever known and loved, loved him back as well. It was such a great relief, that the first true smile he had in weeks began to appear on his tired face, giving him the courage to open the rest of his friends replies.

Harry,

I am doing perfectly well, really. While I'm glad you're thinking a little more cautiously, it wasn't your fault. We chose to join you and fight by your side, and I will continue to, so stop blaming yourself. If you hadn't taught us so well, then we wouldn't even be here to thank you.

I hope the Dursleys are treating you better, and that we can see each other at some point this summer. Be careful Harry.

Love,

Hermione

Harry,

My Gran has never been prouder of me in her whole life; she actually called me a true Gryffindor. I have you to thank for that Harry, you are a great teacher and an even better friend. My Gran's taking me to get a new wand from Olivander's this weekend, I'm so excited to get one tuned to me, and my Dad's always gave me some troubles. Keep in touch Harry.

Neville

Harry,

My Dad and I are leaving tomorrow to go in search of the Crumple Horned Snorkack. We are first going to Albania, and then to Hungary. We will probably be gone all summer so keep your head up; you're a great wizard and friend.

Luna

PS. I am sending you a book that I think you need to read; it's one of my most prized possessions, but I didn't want to weigh Hedwig down any more.

"What?" Harry asked the empty room in confusion as he stared at Luna's postscript in wonder.

Harry was overall very pleased with his friend's replies, nobody seemed to blame him, except for himself, and they all valued his friendship. In fact, Neville and Luna completely ignored his guilt ridden apology, and wrote to him as if nothing happened. It was a tremendous relief for Harry to know that his friends really cared about him, and didn't blame or hate him for the Department of Mysteries fiasco. Grabbing some parchment and his quill, Harry began the process of writing replies.

Ron & Ginny,

Thank you both so much, both for your words and the food, it saved my life. Yes, my oaf of a cousin is still on his diet (not that it will help),

and food has been pretty scarce around here. Say hello to your family for me, I'll probably be stuck here for most of the summer though, but at least Dumbledore is trying to keep me in the loop this time around. Feel free to keep sending food, I love the meat pies! Talk to you both soon.

Harry

PS. Ron, I think we should drop Divination next year, even if we pass our OWL's ...it's a waste of our time, what do you think?

Hermione,

Thank you so much Hermione. You're a great friend, and I hope you truly are all better, and telling me you are fine, like I would. I am totally bored here, and have even taken to revising our old textbooks ...stop laughing. Do you think you can lend me something else to read? I'll take anything, and I know you have quite the library. How do you like Ancient Runes and Arithmancy, I'm thinking of dropping Divination and History of Magic, but I don't know much about either subject? Are you and your family going on holiday this summer?

Harry

Neville,

I'm really happy for you mate. You are a true Gryffindor, and don't let anyone tell you differently. Mr. Olivander though, is a little weird, I tried almost a hundred wands until we found the right one, and he was happy as a clam, the more we tried. Thanks for believing in me, it means a lot. Do you think I can borrow a book or two on Herbology? I guess I've never taken the time to learn the basics, but love gardening and was just interested in learning more. Say hello to your Gran for me, and write back soon.

Harry

Harry put down his quill, deciding to write Luna back after he got the book she promised to send, still wondering what it was. He called to

Hedwig sitting in her cage, calmly preening herself, before she flew down to his bed and held out her leg to attach the outgoing parcels.

“I need you to go by Neville’s, Hermione’s, and then the Weasley’s, girl,” he whispered to his feathered friend who hooted happily in reply before taking flight out the window and disappearing into the bright morning sky.

Harry still had less than two hours until someone from the Order came to check on him, which he was still not very happy about agreeing to the other day. He didn’t want to see anyone from the Order; he just wanted to be left alone with his thoughts and studies. Harry decided to eat another meat pie from the Weasley’s before trying to exercise for the first time. He knew he couldn’t leave his house, or even his room for that matter, and yesterdays day of reading had given him horrible stiffness and cramps from inactivity, but his exercises where going to be important even if somewhat limited.

He figured that the only exercises he could do in his meager bedroom, were simple sit-ups and pushups, and maybe some stretching. He couldn’t go outside to run or swim, not that he enjoyed swimming at all, especially since the second task. He didn’t have access to the expensive exercise equipment he had seen at health clubs in town, so he didn’t know how he would train for endurance and cardio. He hoped for now that he had done enough of that at Quidditch practice when he could still play. For now though, he would work on increasing his core strength through the basics.

He started by doing pushups, and quickly realized that he was not very strong when he got to twenty five before his arms seized up and he could no longer lift himself off the floor. After a short rest, Harry began again doing pushups, pushing his weak body to its absolute limits over and over again, before rolling onto his back and trying to slow his ragged breathing. He then slowly began doing sit-ups at his own pace, and quickly lost count as he passed a hundred.

His whole body was covered in sweat, as he pushed himself past what his body was prepared for or used to. His sit-ups almost become mechanical as he continued for another a half-hour, before

collapsing in absolute exhaustion. His body ached, especially his stomach, arms, and chest which burned with an incredible soreness that he was unused to as he lay on the floor panting heavily.

He slowly began stretching the sore muscles making them feel like they were ripping out of his body as his breathing slowly relaxed along with some of the stiffness in his muscles. He immediately realized his mistake when he got up and noticed that he was sweaty and stunk, and desperately needed a shower, but had already been let out for the day. He reminded himself that he needed to work out before he was let out to shower every morning, which shouldn't be a problem since he hardly slept anyway.

Taking a deep sigh, and sitting back against his bed, Harry noticed it was already almost minutes to noon, and his guard would surely be coming shortly. Just as the thoughts were entering his mind, he heard someone knock on the house's front door in the distance, and silently cursed Albus Dumbledore for getting him to agree to these 'visits.' A few minutes later, and he could hear footsteps outside his door, and then the unlocking of his bedroom's many locks before two women entered the small bedroom both looking very disgusted, but for entirely different reasons.

His aunt's boney, horse-like face was stuck in a tight scowl as she eyed her good for nothing nephew and the bright pink haired woman she entered with. The short spiky pink hair of Tonks was the only happy feature about the angry young auror as she glared daggers at the boney muggle who treated the Boy-Who-Lived so horribly. Her eyes and face showed the immense hurt she was still dealing with, and the condition she found Harry living in, was pushing her over the edge she had been teetering on since the night at the Department of Mysteries.

Harry watched as Tonks' arm slowly made its way to her wand, and realized that something bad would happen if he didn't put a stop to it quickly. He jumped off his bed and to the bedroom door which he stood beside before looking at his aunt forcefully and speaking.

"Thank you Aunt Petunia," spoke Harry clearly as he held the door for her to leave.

She stole a quick glance back at the angry young auror before turning and stomping off and back towards her spotless kitchen, muttering under her breath something about freaks as she went. Harry closed the bedroom door, thankful at least that it was staying unlocked for a little while, maybe he could get a shower after all. He glanced over at the still angry Tonks, noticing her look skeptically around the tiny and barren bedroom before turning back to look at the skinny younger wizard.

“Um ...Harry ...do they always keep you locked in here?” she asked both nervously and angrily after she spotted the cat-flap and empty breakfast plate that sat next to it.

“Um ...well ...they let me out to use the loo twice a day ...but, yeah,” whispered Harry ashamedly as his eyes locked on the floor, unable to look at silently fuming auror in the face.

“WHAT!” she yelled in outrage as her voice reached a level only the Dursleys dared reach at Privet Drive. “Does Dumbledore know?”

“He and Kingsley were here yesterday, only then, Uncle Vernon was the one who let them into the house,” he replied quietly, trying to get the excitable auror to calm down and not get him in any more trouble.

“Were you locked in when they came?” she asked as her voice slowly lowered in volume, but still held a very irate edge to it, to which Harry only nodded not wanting to further anger her.

“I can’t believe they didn’t say anything, Harry. Remus is going to be livid when he finds out,” Tonks continued in a manner where it seemed she was ranting to herself out loud. When she noticed Harry’s head shoot up at the mention of the last true Marauder, she saw a look of such intense pain in the teenager’s bright green eyes that a shiver went down her spine, before she spoke up to alleviate the uncomfortable silence that had begun to grow.

“Remus is really worried about you Harry. We all are,” she added in a soft and concerned voice.

“Don’t worry, the weapon is just fine,” snapped back Harry as his anger flashed momentarily as he remembered that Tonks was just here checking up on Dumbledore’s precious weapon.

“Weapon? What weapon Harry?” asked Tonks in a total state of confusion and some fear at the look of anger in the younger wizard’s eyes.

“Never mind,” mumbled Harry angrily, as he wondered if Tonks didn’t know about the Prophecy, and was apparently just a pawn of Dumbledore’s too, instantly feeling bad for snapping at her ...again.

“Harry ...what’s going on?” asked Tonks nervously as she watched Harry retreat to the worried and depressed teenager he was yesterday.

“I can’t talk about it Tonks,” replied Harry quietly after a short and silent pause, but after seeing her hurt look, Harry quickly added, “you have to ask the Headmaster if he’ll tell you.”

“Is this about the Prophecy, Harry?” asked Tonks

“What do you know about the Prophecy?” interrupted Harry with a combination of both worry and hope in his sharp voice.

“Nothing really, only that the Order was guarding it all last year, and that it smashed when ...when ...well you know,” she finished as her eyes slowly began tearing up at her memories and the Pensieve scene of Harry’s flashing through her mind.

“Oh,” replied Harry in a deflated voice as he again took to his favorite new hobby of staring at the floor by his feet as the waves of sadness slowly began to surface again.

“I ...I-I’m so sorry Harry,” Tonks cried out, no longer capable of holding back the flood of tears that overwhelmed her into uncontrollable sobs just by looking at the pain on the younger wizard’s face. “...It’s ...my fault ...he’s dead ...I ...I couldn’t ...couldn’t beat her,” she gasped out between the deep and heavy sobs.

“What ...Tonks, it’s not your fault,” replied Harry in shock at the devastated auror crying hysterically in front of him. “You weren’t the one who led everyone there in the first place ...S-Siri ...he sacrificed himself to ...save me ...its MY FAULT,” he finished not in anger but sorrow, as his own tears started to slowly leak out, not caring any longer if someone saw him break down.

“What?” she paused between sobs to stare at the now crying Harry Potter in utter disbelief.

She had witnessed angry Harry, everyone in the Order had, but never witnessed Harry break down or look so helpless, and she didn’t know if anybody ever had, but the sight was beyond terrifying and sobering. He had faced so much already in his short life, and still always seemed to have the fight to go on. But now, there was no fight in his sad and crying green eyes, which gave Harry a glazed almost lost look that immediately made Tonks worry about how badly this whole thing had affected the young wizard.

It had never really occurred to her how much Harry would be hurting over losing Sirius; they only knew each other a short time. But then, she had only really gotten to know Sirius this year even though they were cousins, their parents did not get along at all, and had never visited their relations growing up. But she had her own family, Sirius was Harry’s family, the only he ever knew. Tonks’ tearful violet eyes couldn’t look away from the mesmerizing and depressed emerald eyes in front of her, obscured by the tears they were sharing over the loss of Sirius Black.

“I’m so sorry Tonks,” spoke Harry in barely above a whisper as the silence stretched, his tears had intensified to match her own.

Tonks’ body reacted before either of them knew what happened. At the sight of Harry’s renewed tears, she had unknowingly crept closer to the younger wizard and had now engulfed him into a warm hug that would make Mrs. Weasley proud. They both paused after the initial contact due to the awkwardness that was arising, but their collective grief quickly broke those walls, as the embrace tightened until they were both crying onto each other’s shoulders, holding on to one another for both physical and emotional support.



They stayed that way for almost a half-hour, sharing and comforting one another's overwhelming grief. Neither wanted to break the comfortable silence or the heartfelt embrace they shared. But soon, the physical exhaustion took control of their bodies and legs, and soon they had both collapsed down to the floor, unable to hold each other up any longer.

Tonks, who was closer to the bed clipped the edge on her way down and was launched sideways unto the bare floor where she landed with a thud, while Harry only fell to his knees and quickly took up a sitting position on the floor. Tonks, who landed on her side right next to Harry, was just starting to lift herself off the floor, when Harry started snickering slightly. Tonks' head snapped up in the direction of the offending noise, and her face grew red from embarrassment at seeing Harry's snickers grow into full on giggles, until she too joined in the laughter of her not-so-graceful fall.

They were both emotionally spent, and although the fall wasn't really that funny to either of them, they continued to laugh almost hysterically, until their sides hurt and their breathing became heavy and forced. It was a while later when the laughter finally subsided, leaving both Harry and Tonks winded and emotionally drained. Just as they were getting up from the floor, they heard someone approaching his door, and then watched as another bowl of cold soup and cup of water were slid through the cat-flap and deposited by Harry's bedroom door.

"Is that all you get for lunch?" asked Tonks in a surprised outrage as she eyed the pitiful meal that lay before her.

"Um ...usually," replied Harry once again becoming shy and embarrassed now that the attention was solely on him again.

"What about breakfast and dinner?" she asked more sincerely, trying not to upset or offend Harry, especially after the cleansing laughter they just shared together.

"Dinner's the same, breakfast ...not so much," finished Harry shyly, but with a twinge of anger in his own voice.

“Anorexic models eat more than that Harry,” replied Tonks absolutely furious at the despicable muggles at Privet Drive. “I’ll bring some food with me tomorrow okay.”

She realized that she was always so fascinated with his beautiful eyes, that she never noticed how skinny and undernourished he was, and now that it was staring her right in the face with the most pain filled eyes she had ever seen, she realized just how horrible it must have been and still is for Harry. She felt terrible that nobody had done anything to make sure he was being properly taken care of. Anyone who came to Privet Drive would know immediately that Harry Potter, the most famous wizard of the age, was not cared for or even tolerated by his own relations.

There were no visible signs in any part of the house that even suggested another occupant other than the three Dursleys. His bedroom door alone, told countless tales of both abuse and neglect, and should have sent warning signs to anyone that had visited or even seen it. Not to mention the muggles themselves, were the worst sort, and she knew quite a few muggles, her dad being muggle-born and all.

“Thanks Tonks,” replied Harry even more shyly as he starred at the young auror thankfully, not knowing why she was being so nice.

She was always nice and funny, but this level of compassion seemed above and beyond her usual bubbly character. Not that he was complaining, it had been really good to have Tonks come by today. To have someone to share his grief over Sirius with, someone to lean on, embrace and comfort, someone to laugh with, and even help him. He let a small smile creep to the corners of his mouth as he watched the first person to really make him feel somewhat better about life and himself since Sirius died.

“It’s really no trouble at all Harry,” she finally replied after another short pause, but with a playful smirk on her face that instantly gave Harry a rush of excitement he had never felt before.

Trying to remember that feeling, Harry thought about his other excited moments, and could think of few that didn't involve fighting for his life, but that was a different type of excitement altogether. Tonks watched as an entire series of emotions flashed through the sparkling emerald irises in a matter of moments; excitement, fear, hate, pain, acceptance, passion, happiness, and joy. She had never in her life seen anything more beautiful, drastic, and vivid.

Even as a metamorphmagus that changes her hair and eye color by cycling through the colors of the rainbow, couldn't produce the varying depths of color and emotion in her own eyes. She had never seen so many incredible shades of green in her life, and they were beyond mesmerizing. They would change between a dark forest green with specks of black, to a bright emerald green that sparkled gold, and just about every hue in between, and seemed to leak his emotions through his irises like nothing Tonks had ever seen.

Realizing that she had probably been staring at the younger wizard for an unusual amount of time, Tonks looked around for a change of topic. Tearing away from his intense emotion filled eyes; she took in his still slightly sweaty clothes and body and gave a small laugh in the back of her throat.

"Um ...not to be rude Harry, but when was the last time you showered ...you kind of stink," she asked as the playful smirk returned to her face, that once again greatly excited the young wizard.

"This morning," he tried to playfully retort, "...but I've been trying to exercise a little."

"What kind of exercises can you do locked in here?" she asked as she glanced around the tiny bedroom.

"You know pushups and sit-ups, that's about it," replied Harry with a shy shrug.

"You should add in some jumping jacks, those are real good for you too. Most wizards never exercise their bodies at all. They are so lazy some times, and just expect magic to do everything for them," added Tonks as another small idea formed in her mind that would be a great

surprise for the young wizard when she came back tomorrow. "So what else have you been keeping busy with?" she asked with a raised eyebrow and a mischievous grin.

"Just studying, I guess," added Harry who hadn't seen her mischievous look or caught the playful tone of her last question, having been staring at the floor.

"Studying what? Didn't you just sit your O.W.L.S.?" she asked, both taken aback and surprised to her obviously teasing question and his lack of response.

"Well ...yeah, but I still have loads to learn," he replied uncertainly, now seeing the confusion on her face.

"But its summer holiday?" she replied, not remembering Harry being much of a studier, even while in school according to everyone else.

"What else am I going to do ...stuck in here," he answered glumly as he motioned around his tiny bedroom and then the door that usually kept him locked in.

"Yeah ...I suppose so," she breathed out slowly as she too swept her eyes around the barren and tiny room, feeling so sorry for the young wizard in front of her.

He didn't deserve this at all, and the fact that he not only survived growing up here, but also overcame all the pain and hate to become such a caring and good person spoke volumes about Harry's true character to the young auror. Deciding then and there that she had the power to do something positive for Harry this summer, whether it was just having someone else to talk to while stuck in isolation, or someone to help him get good meals, she would be there. Isolation wasn't healthy for anyone, and now without Sirius, they both needed a friend who understood their pain, loss, and even anger.

Maybe she could even talk to Dumbledore about letting Remus come to visit Harry once in a while, he too was in the same boat as them, and knew that he missed Sirius dreadfully. It would be good for them both to know they each had other people to be there for them, to help

them through the rough times and celebrate the best of them. Remus was also Harry's only link to his parents, and vice versa, and that they would need each other.

"I'm your guard again tomorrow, so I'll bring you some real lunch for us around noon," spoke Tonks as she realized it was past four o'clock, and she needed to do her rounds of the neighborhood and check in at Mrs. Figg's. "Sound good?"

"Um ...Tonks?" asked Harry shyly as the auror stood to leave after her question got no initial response from the younger wizard.

"Yeah, what's up?"

"Could you wait for like five minutes, so I can take a quick shower before my aunt locks me back in after you leave?" asked Harry nervously, not wanting to get Tonks into any trouble or put her out after being so nice to him today.

"If you wanted to take a shower together Harry, you should of just asked?" teased Tonks feeling very proud of herself at seeing the rapidly growing blush that spread over Harry's face as he began stuttering incoherently.

"I-I ...u-um ...y-ye-n-n-no ...I-I did-didn't ..."

"Relax Harry, I'm only teasing you," she said with a playful wink, that did nothing to calm the younger wizard's blush, before grabbing his towel and racing to the loo, leaving behind a snickering young auror.

Within five minutes, Harry walked back into his room, wrapped in only the scrawny brown thread bare towel, and his raven black hair still dripping wet. Tonks froze at the sight of the wet and half naked Boy-Who-Lived, standing in front of her nervously, but looking absolutely ...hot. He was still skinny as hell, but actually had some athleticism to his body as a result of Quidditch, and with the wet hair looked absolutely gorgeous, causing the young auror to have to hide her own blush from creeping to her face, being a metamorphmagus did have its advantages.

"Thanks for waiting Tonks," spoke Harry nervously as the older witch watched him with an unfamiliar gleam in her now violet colored eyes.

"It was no problem Harry," she finally managed to reply, before the mischievous smile once again appeared on her face. "It was definitely worth the wait," she finished with another wink as she headed for the door and said a quick goodbye before disappearing down the hall and out of Number Four Privet Drive.

Harry quickly got dressed as he heard his aunt at his bedroom door re-applying the many locks keeping him in. Harry didn't really care, he was feeling much better than before, Tonks' visit had quite the positive effect on his mood, and he actually found himself looking forward to her next visit. Taking a look around his room, Harry grabbed the last stack of his old textbooks he had left to review, and set to studying.

By the time that cold soup was placed in his room for dinner, Harry had finished all of his textbooks, and had just picked up the three volume set he received from Remus and Sirius at Christmas. He had already read most of the first volume over the last semester, which came in really handy for the DA meetings at the end of the year, but he had yet to open the other two. He decided to start back at the beginning, and pulled out volume one of Practical Defense Magic & Its Uses Against the Dark Arts, and settled into bed for another long night of reading, completely ignoring the cold soup.

Several hours later, Harry's studying was interrupted by his stomach giving off a loud grumble, causing him to take a small break and eat another of the meat pies his friends sent him. He finished the first volume in the dead of night, not wanting to sleep and enter his nightmares, and also really enjoying the sense of accomplishment he felt while learning Defensive Magic. The first volume dealt almost exclusively with basic defensive magics, which Harry felt very confident with when he finished reading even though he knew he wouldn't be able to practice any of it for a while.

He grabbed the second volume trying desperately to fight off sleeping for a while longer, and returned to his bed reading slowly under the light of the moon filtering through his window. Shortly, he had to

surrender to the call of Morpheus, and marked his page before falling back into bed, asleep before his head hit the pillow.

He woke suddenly in a cold sweat, in what seemed like no time at all, and in reality was only about two hours. He jumped out of bed, despite the soreness that seemed to come from everywhere. His muscles, bones, and head all ached something painful, but still Harry felt somewhat awake and rested, and ready for another long day. He knew he still had time to workout before his aunt would let him out to shower for the day, and started to it.

Immediately upon starting his pushups, the soreness burned in his chest and arms, and he knew that today would be a very difficult day. He managed however to force himself past his accomplishments from the day before, despite his protesting muscles, and he soon found himself standing under the hot water of his morning shower, feeling better than he had in over a week. He got dressed, ate his toast from the Dursleys, and the last of the food from Ron and Ginny before beginning his day.

He returned to the second volume of his Defense set, and began the long process of reading and taking notes in his ever filling notebook. The second volume dealt more with Advanced Defense, and also provided some information on defending against a lot of the Dark Arts spells themselves, how to recognize and counter them. He had even found the spell that Antonin Dolohov had hit Hermione with wordlessly during the battle in the Department of Mysteries. He was excited to try out some of the spells he had been studying, but knew he wouldn't have the opportunity until he was back at Hogwarts in over two months.

That was the main reason he started keeping the notebook, and detailed information on any interesting spells he came across and wanted to remember. It would be so long until he could practice, that he knew he would otherwise forget all of the information by the end of the summer. He silently fumed about the stupidity of the underage sorcery law, how was he going to ever get better if he couldn't even practice magic for almost three months.

Led by that idiot of a Minister, it was no wonder that the Ministry of Magic wasn't any help in the coming war with Voldemort. As they stood now though, Harry wasn't about to ask Cornelius Fudge for anything, and knew that the Minister probably felt the same way towards him. He was thankful that Madam Bones had been able to hide the pulsating incident, and knew that if Fudge had found out, he would probably be on trial already. Were these the people that he was supposed to be fighting for and saving from the wrath of Voldemort?

The same people who ridiculed him and called him deranged and unbalanced, were the same people he was fighting to protect, and it made him feel slightly ill. What did he owe those people? He was sick and tired of being used by the Ministry and the Daily Prophet for that matter, and swore to himself that he would soon be putting a stop to it, it was his life they were messing with and he had had enough.

He was broken out of his thoughts by a distant knock on Privet Drive's front door, and his spirits immediately brightened as he noticed what time it was. "Tonks" he squealed as he sat up in bed and watched his bedroom door anxiously. A minute later, and then the clicking of his bedroom door locks signified the arrival of the young auror. When the door was opened, only Tonks entered, leaving an angry and purple faced Uncle Vernon, it being Saturday, gaping in the doorway before Tonks closed it with a quick slam.

She looked the exact opposite of Harry's angry uncle; she had her patented bubblegum pink hair in short vibrant spikes and a large smile that lit up her heart shaped face. She was wearing a pair of tight blue jeans and a colorful Weird Sisters tee, and carrying what appeared to be a very heavy and full backpack over her shoulder. In her hands, she balanced two large pizza boxes that were still steaming slightly, before she gave Harry a quick wink.

"Wotcher Harry," spoke Tonks with her grin widening as she spotted the almost happy and excited look on Harry's face at seeing either her or the food, either way making her feel much better instantly. "Hungry?"



"Hi Tonks," greeted Harry, "...I've never had pizza before," he whispered almost reverently as he eyes the two boxes in front of him with genuine curiosity in his searching eyes.

"You've never had pizza?" she asked him in alarm, before lowering her voice and anger at his ashamed look and quickly added, "oh ...don't worry Harry, you are going to love it."

She was absolutely right, Harry did love the pizza, the plain cheese was good, but didn't compare to the meat lovers one which he with Tonks' help managed to devour in twenty minutes. They still had most of the cheese pizza left, and stored it under Harry's loose floor board. Tonks suggested eating the rest of his pizza tonight or for breakfast tomorrow, saying she would bring more again sometime soon since he liked it so much.

"I brought you another present, Harry. It was no easy task getting it here without magic, so you better be appreciative," she spoke waging her pointed finger at Harry, while her mischievous grin settled back onto her face making Harry hitch his breath.

"My dad was really into weight training and running for a while back, and had these all over the garage," she continued as she began pulling several heavy metal disks and two short poles with little clips on their ends, and a long thin rope.

Even someone who grew up as sheltered as Harry, knew that Tonks had brought weight lifting equipment, and was interested in what exactly they could do, or how they worked. Tonks, sensing his confusion at all the separate pieces lying around the floor, began piecing the two handheld dumbbell weights together. When she was finished, she grabbed one, and began doing a variety of different types of exercises. She curled it, pressed it over her head, brought her arm out to the side, and squatted, all with the weight in her hand, giving him a quick rundown of some of the more basic exercises.

Harry immediately knew how important these would become in helping him get into better shape and increase his muscular strength. He thanked Tonks profusely several times for both bringing them and lending them to him in his time of need and boredom. They set them

aside and continued chatting freely for another hour, keeping the topics light, and neither wanting to bring up their mutual emotional meltdowns the previous day. They talked about weight lifting and quidditch, school and pranks, and even spent some time talking about what Dumbledore told the Order, and Voldemort's plans as they knew them.

Harry enjoyed the time he was spending with Tonks, she was very easy to talk to, and a lot of fun. She didn't press him with annoying questions, and spoke freely and honestly, something they both seemed to need. Harry didn't even get upset when Tonks told him of Dumbledore's understanding of his battle with Voldemort, or the actions the Order and Ministry were taking. He was pleased to finally be included in what was happening in the world and war, and he knew he had Tonks to thank for that. He was sure she wasn't supposed to give him this much information, based on some of her hesitations and reluctances, but was pleased when all objections were thrown aside as she recounted everything the Order and Voldemort had been up to since she joined the Order.

Harry was excited to hear that Voldemort had not been up to much since that night, and that he might have even been injured when he tried to possess him. Aside from his one little dream the other night, his scar hadn't really bothered him at all since he returned back from school, his nightmares were just that, his. He took that as a good sign, and that he couldn't feel Voldemort much at all, even now was a true bonus. For the first time in his life, for a brief moment, he thought that he might actually have the slightest chance to win this war.

There were however, still quite a few things he needed to know before he could ever even think of being ready to face the feared Dark Lord. Besides the obvious need to learn more spells and magic, and become more powerful, was a new need that was creeping up in Harry, the need to be in control of his own life, and never be manipulated again. Not by Voldemort, Fudge, Dumbledore, Snape, the Daily Prophet, or anyone. From now on, Harry would control his own life and do all in his power to do so.

In order to gain and maintain control however brought him to his first and probably greatest obstacle, Occlumency. He needed to not only

learn it, but be skilled enough to block three of the most powerful Legilimens alive in Europe. It wouldn't be good for Dumbledore, Snape, or Voldemort to learn of his plans and secrets, or invade his mind now that he knew the contents of the Prophecy, and his role in the upcoming war. Could he even practice Occlumency during the summer, did that count as magic too, and how exactly would he learn since Snape had never explained how exactly to 'clear your mind.'

Tonks sat silently next to him, watching him working things out in his head, studying his movements and features. He really did seem a lot older than his fifteen years suggested, he had already seen and done so much, that she could no longer consider him a kid. After a short silence, she heard Harry give a frustrated sigh, and decided to try and find out what was up.

"What are you thinking about Harry?" she asked shyly, not wanting to upset him in his silent thought, but with enough concern in her voice and eyes that showed she truly did care. Harry could sense her genuine concern, and gave her a warm comforting smile before another long sigh escaped his lips as he carefully planned his next words.

"I'm just worried about not being able to practice anything I learn, or need to learn," he said softly as he looked intensely into Tonks' still violet colored eyes.

"What are you trying to learn?" she asked sincerely, hoping that Harry could trust her enough to tell her what was really on her mind.

"Um ...well ...how to stay alive mostly," answered Harry after a short pause where he tried to reword his ideas and fears over and over in his mind, and coming up with nothing better.

He didn't want to scare her off after she had been so nice to him, and he really wasn't ready to talk to anyone about the Prophecy, but he did feel like he owed her some honesty, she deserved that much. Only what could he tell her, and was he ready to tell her anything? Deciding to just go for it, he took a deep steadying breath before answering.

"I want to learn how to fight, and how to protect my mind, but I can't practice dueling or Occlumency without breaking the restriction for underage magic," he added after seeing the blank look on Tonks' face after his 'stay alive' comment.

"Well ...you can't study dueling, but Occlumency doesn't count, or register as magic, only Legilimancy is considered active magic. And I can get you a great book on Occlumency techniques and exercises they give to us at Auror Academy. I'll bring it by on Monday," she added with her smile brightening as she went, realizing that there were even more ways she could help Harry over the summer.

"That would be great Tonks ...thanks," exclaimed Harry with a bright smile of his own as he watched the happy auror bouncing with excitement over being able to help. "I can't thank you enough for all your help Tonks," he added honestly and watched as her blush rose in her cheeks for only a moment under his intense gaze.

"Wait ...who is my guard tomorrow if you're not here?" asked Harry curiously.

"Well Remus has been trying to get Dumbledore to let him do it, but he's got him doing other things for the Order that nobody else can do," replied Tonks. "Bill Weasley will be here on Sundays, his only day off from Gringotts, you know Bill right?"

"Oh ...yeah sure," replied a stunned Harry, still somewhat thinking about Remus talking to the werewolves for the Order, and not knowing why Bill would want to guard him on his only day off.

"What is it Harry?" asked Tonks after seeing the look of confusion cross Harry's face for a short moment.

"Nothing really ..." replied Harry before seeing the concern back in Tonks' eyes, and knowing he didn't want to upset her, decided to elaborate. "I guess I didn't think Bill would be the guard duty type."

"And what type is that Harry?" asked Tonks with a hint of accusation in her voice, but a mischievous grin playing at the corners of her mouth.

Oh shite. "Um ...uh ...you know ...um ...oh, he doesn't have to hide the fact that he's in the Order at his job ...so he could be out recruiting ...or talking to the goblins ...or something else more important," he stumbled out of his mouth awkwardly under the glare he was receiving from the young auror.

"Oh, and since when is guarding you not important? Dumbledore seems to think that it's the most important of the Order's tasks," she spoke importantly as she raised her head high and straightened her posture, a move that gave off the impression that she truly believed in what she was saying.

Harry couldn't believe that Tonks took this job so seriously; he was nobody important and didn't deserve her help or understanding. He was amazed that she felt so strongly about protecting him and despite the implications of the Prophecy which she knew nothing about, Harry felt somewhat reassured that she cared that much. And her care seemed so much more than just a duty or obligation, she truly cared about him, Harry, not the Boy-Who-Lived. The idea alone was just so hard for Harry to believe, he had grown up never knowing what it was like to have people care about you, or that you even deserved that care.

"Thanks Tonks," he said quietly as his smile reached and warmed his eyes as he fought a blush that was again starting to creep up his cheeks at his latest revelation.

"Don't worry about it Harry," she replied as she struggled to keep her own blush in check, with much better results as she looked into the intensely burning green eyes of the younger wizard. "Will you be alright with Bill tomorrow?" she inquired with the concern still on her face as she stared unblinkingly into Harry's startling emerald irises.

"Oh yeah, Bill's fine," he replied somewhat shyly as their eyes never wavered from one another's, and a slight anxiety began to build between the two still relatively new friends.

"Well ...then I guess I better get going Harry," said Tonks awkwardly as she slowly stood from her spot on the bed, still not taking her now

almost matching green eyes away from those of her younger counterpart.

“Um ...okay,” replied Harry with the same sense of awkwardness as he too rose from his spot at the end of the bed to face the young auror.

“See you Monday Harry, and take care of yourself tomorrow,” she added while slowly making her way to his bedroom door,

Half-way there, she turned to face Harry and with their eyes still locked on one another's, she leaned in and gave him a quick hug. Harry was momentarily surprised by the action, but quickly returned it before they broke apart and Tonks left his bedroom. Harry once again was left with a feeling of peace that he just couldn't determine, after the young auror's departure, but shrugged it off to just having someone care about him enough to visit and keep him company.

Although the loneliness and boredom quickly returned after Tonks left, it was not nearly as bad as it had been so far this summer. He was still stuffed from the large amount of pizza he consumed, and was just thinking about how much Tonks had improved his life in the two short days she came and spent time with him. He returned to the very end of the second volume of Practical Defensive Magic, and settled back onto his bed with his notebook and pen at hand.

He quickly finished the second volume, and moved on to the third without even a pause, fully engrossed in the magic he was learning. He methodically went through what he soon found to be the best of the three volume set late into the night, only breaking to eat some more pizza well after his relatives went to sleep. The final book dealt more with dueling tactics and strategies, many common offensive and binding spells that mostly bordered on the Dark Arts themselves. He fell asleep late in the night as he finished the final volume, exhaustion fueling his need for some rest.

He awoke hours later just at the break of dawn, with Hedwig hooting happily at the foot of his bed. She had the familiar Weasley food package and replies to his letters attached to her leg. Ignoring the letters for now, he unpacked the food and ate the few treacle tarts

and the last two slices of pizza before putting the new meat pies under the loose floor board.

He then began a new morning workout, and only did one set of pushups and sit-ups before warming up his heart-rate with jumping rope. He then went on to playing with the weights that Tonks had brought him. His arms, chest, and shoulders were sore and wobbly by the time his aunt came to let him use the shower, which he took great pleasure in standing under, as the scalding hot water relaxed the tight muscles. Upon returning to his room and getting the customary piece of toast and water before being locked in the room, Harry fed himself and Hedwig one of the two meat pies Ginny had sent this morning, getting a hoot of approval from the snowy white owl.

He spent the next hours waiting for Bill to arrive reading over his many pages of notes on all the interesting spells he had collected over the last several days of reviewing and studying everything he owned. He was very pleased with his progress, and note taking, having captured all relevant information on each of the spells he hoped to practice and get better using, as well as all the new spells he now wanted to learn and be able to protect against.

He thought about Bill's arrival, and then subsequently about the whole Weasley family he had grown to know and treasure. In his fourth year, when everyone seemed to turn against him during the Tri-Wizard Tournament, it was Bill and Mrs. Weasley who came and acted as his family, something he was beyond grateful for even now. He had taken a real liking to the eldest Weasley boy, with his long dark copper red hair and dragon fang earring. He was smart and fun and you could easily tell how much his other siblings looked up to him and why. He was again broken out of his reverie by the distant knocking on the front door as he realized it was almost noon, and Bill Weasley had arrived.

AN: Three down ...much more to go. Thank you reviewers and readers, this has been a blast so far. Don't worry, I'm not planning to rush things too fast, but keep in mind a lot will be happening each and every day. Special thanks to ... The Fanfic Guardian for the long and helpful review.

Review this Story/Chapter



## Chapter 4

Bill Weasley entered Harry's bedroom quickly and quietly, leaving Harry's uncle, purple faced and sputtering on the other side of the door. Bill looked exactly how Harry remembered him from the end of his fourth year. His trademark Weasley red hair pulled back neatly into a long ponytail by a leather throng, while his dragon fang earring dangled brightly beside his thin and grinning face.

He wasn't quite as tall as Ron, few were, but he was much thicker and sturdier through the shoulders and chest, and had the look of someone who was in great physical shape. He was also carrying a very large picnic basket that Harry hoped contained lunch.

"Hi Harry," Bill began as he reached out his hand to shake the younger wizards in greeting.

"Hi Bill," replied Harry shyly, as he began wondering what was going through the eldest Weasley's mind as he watched him glance around the small bedroom.

Bill had a pretty good idea what to expect when he arrived, after hearing about Harry's living situation from both his own siblings, and Tonks' description last night. Still however, he was unprepared for the poor treatment from the muggles that Harry must have just grown accustomed to. He took in the meager surroundings that made up Harry's bedroom and prison, and shuddered at the lack of life and love in the room.

Not a single part of the Burrow was this devoid of anything, and despite their little money, he silently thanked his parents for not ever being little in their love. His heart went out to the younger wizard, for all that had happened in his life, and all that he had to put up with. Being the oldest of seven Weasleys, Bill was often in charge, and got a great deal of pride helping and protecting his younger siblings, and knew then and there that he would be the older brother that Harry never had, but desperately needed. He set the large picnic basket on the bed before turning back to Harry with a warm smile on his face.

"My mum packed you enough food for a small army," he said chuckling slightly, remembering his mum's frantic cooking and filling of the picnic basket before he could leave.

"Brilliant," exclaimed Harry as a smile spread across his face, as he thought about the Weasley matron who was always so good to him, "thanks."

"I'll leave the basket with you, it's enchanted to keep the food fresh, so you can eat whenever," replied Bill happily to the smiling young wizard, before opening the basket and removing a square piece of wood and a small bag that sat on top. "I thought we could have a game of chess, Ron says you're pretty good ...for a beginner."

"I'm not a beginner, I've been playing him for years," answered Harry, unaware that Bill was just trying to egg him on.

"Oh yeah, and how many times have you beaten Ronald?" he asked with a raised eyebrow and amused smirk on his face.

"Um ...well ...I haven't actually beaten him yet," replied Harry as he hung his head slightly embarrassed and upset that Bill would tease him about it.

"Ha ...," laughed Bill, "of course you haven't. Nobody's been able to beat him since he was eight years old. Ginny's the only one that will still play with him, he's unmerciful towards the rest of us, even dad," finished Bill with a warm smile on his handsome face. "I was just giving you a hard time Harry. I'm no where near as good as Ron, we should have fun."

"Oh ...okay," answered a relieved Harry as he moved over to the bed and sat down next to the picnic basket before opening it and searching first for lunch.

Harry removed a large portion of potatoes and roast, and began eating as Bill slowly started setting up the chess board and pieces he brought. They ended up enjoying a great game of chess, which only ended after Bill's lone knight and King cornered Harry's King, and forced him to surrender. The game had taken quite a while, and the

two wizards had spent most of that time talking lightly about Hogwarts and the other Weasleys.

Harry really enjoyed spending time with Bill; he was very friendly and easy to talk to. It was easy to see why all the other Weasley children looked up to their oldest brother; there was no other word to describe him, other than cool. He even came back to England to be closer to everyone in his family and help more with the Order.

"Well Harry," started Bill after all the chess pieces were back in the bag they came in. "I'm going to take off now. The goblins have given me Sundays off, so I'll be your guard and visitor on those days."

"Great ...thanks again for everything Bill," said Harry as he watched the oldest Weasley stand and head for the door, before remembering a question he had wanted to ask him. "Um ...Bill? Next week, could you tell me about Gringotts and Will Readings? I have to attend one in two weeks, and I don't know anything about them."

"Sure Harry, I'll see you next week," said Bill as he left Harry's bedroom, and a smiling teenage wizard behind as he returned to his post to await the evening shift change with Mad Eye Moody.

Harry made his way over to his desk, and began the process of opening the letters from his friends that Hedwig had brought him back that morning.

Harry,

Thanks for everything. We are going to Ollivander's tomorrow, and I am now real excited to try a bunch of different wands. I'd be happy to lend you some books on Herbology, and I'm sending out our family owl, Lechusa. She is a Spanish Owl that was my mum's familiar at the end of school. I am sending three books, that's her limit, and I was wondering if you had some Defense texts you could maybe send back with her to lend me. I'd really like to keep studying this summer even if we don't have homework; it's been good for me to review all my old texts. I hope you're doing well, and will hopefully get to see you sometime this summer.

Neville

Harry,

I hope you like the food, my mum is sending tons more with Bill tomorrow, or will that be today by the time this reaches you. You have to try to come to the Burrow this summer, Ron is driving me nuts. He spends all his time sending letters back and forth to Hermione, it's pathetic. It's sooo obvious that they both like each other; I just don't know why they don't do something about it. I hope you're being nice to Tonks, she is really great, and everything has to be real hard on her too. Keep safe Harry, and hopefully we'll see you soon.

Ginny

Harry,

Hey mate, how are the muggles treating you? I guess I would drop Divination with you, but I like having at least one easy class so I'm not too sure, although don't tell Hermione that. I need to wait until I get my O.W.L. results before I can decide on anything. I probably won't be able to get the required "O" on Potions, and I may need Divination to fill my schedule...but who knows. You probably didn't hear that the Cannons actually won their last match, and against the Harpies no less. I can't wait to see you this summer.

Ron

Harry,

Did I read correctly, you are revising over the summer vacation, and want even more books to read? What would Ron say if he knew (hahaha)? If you send Hedwig back, I have all my old Arithmancy and Ancient Runes textbooks here, and can send them with her, when she doesn't have other stops to make and loads to carry. I think you would really like the classes; they are much more important and informative than Divination and History of Magic, well at least the way Professor Binns teaches it. I am so proud of you Harry, for taking your education seriously. My parents are taking me to Canada in a

few days, but only for a little over a week. I am really excited; it should be a lot of fun. Stay safe.

Love, Hermione

Harry set down the last of his letters, and grabbed some spare parchment and quill to answer Hermione's letter quickly, before she left for vacation.

Hermione,

Yes, it's true. I have been reading and revising, try not to laugh too long. Unfortunately, there is little else for me to do here. I hope you have a fun holiday with your parents, and hopefully I will see you before the end of the summer. Thanks in advance for lending me the Arithmancy and Ancient Runes texts, just let me know when you need them back. Hedwig might need to rest a bit; I've had her working quite a bit lately. Take care of yourself.

Harry

Harry called Hedwig, who was resting on her perch above his wardrobe. In a flash, she was awake and in front of Harry, rubbing her head into Harry's outstretched hand. After petting her for several minutes, he attached the letter to her leg and asked that she deliver it to Hermione and wait for her reply and books. She gave a soft hoot of approval and an affectionate nip of his finger before flying out the open window into the afternoon sky.

Harry, realizing he was still hungry, attacked the final meat pie from Ginny with a renewed vigor, saving the enchanted picnic basket for many more meals to come. He then went back over all of his notes, determined to improve even if he couldn't practice magic. It was a little later in the night, during a period of great introspection for Harry that a brown barn owl swept into his bedroom with a small brown wrapped package tied to its feet. Harry quickly retrieved the package with Luna's loopy handwriting on it, and opened it to discover a black unmarked leather bound journal with a small note sticking out of its pages.

Harry,

Please guard this journal for me, it's one of the only things of my mother's that I still have, and means an awful lot to me. I know you will find it useful, so hang on to it for a while. Daddy and I are having a great time, even though we haven't seen the Crumple Horned Snorkack yet, we are very close.

You really are a great wizard Harry, and a better friend, thank you for your kind words. I know most people think of me as really weird, so your friendship means an awful lot to me. I am truly sorry about your godfather, but remember that those we really love never truly leave us. You can always find them in your heart. Stay strong and I'll see you on the Hogwarts Express.

Luna

Harry's face immediately paled, his jaw clenched, and a lump caught in his throat painfully at Luna's words ...or were they Sirius' words? The night Harry and Hermione rescued Sirius and Buckbeak came back vividly into Harry's mind, as he was listening to those exact same words spoken by the late Sirius Black. The tears he was holding back erupted into heavy sobs as his first memories of meeting and rescuing his godfather overwhelmed his senses as he collapsed back into bed, wallowing in the misery that is his life. He remained in bed crying for hours, until the dead quiet of the night contrasted sharply with his bitter weeping.

He tried to think about something else to get his mind off his own tormented memories, and remembered the book Luna included, and made his way to his desk to retrieve it. Ignoring the letter, he grabbed the unmarked black leather tome, and returned to his tiny bed. Opening the book's jacket and seeing the title page, Harry froze immediately in his tracks as he stared in horror at the words written; Unspeakable, by Lydia Lovegood. Very slowly and cautiously, he turned the page to find a "Table of Contents" that chilled him to the bone as a cold wave of fear swept through his body like a Dementor.

"Table of Contents" -----page

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Harry didn't know what to think, what to do. He sat staring at the "Table of Contents" with a mixture of both pure fear and overwhelming curiosity. The fear easily won out, leaving the young wizard breathing sporadically between the painful sobs that still racked his lithe frame. Seeing the section dealing with the Veil and the Death Chamber brought forth much too painful memories of his beloved godfather.

While he was curious about the Veil that had so captured his attention on that fateful night, he knew that he was not emotionally capable of dealing with it at the present moment. So with his mind spinning a hundred kilometers per hour, Harry set the book aside and

climbed into bed. Willing sleep to come and disrupt his thoughts, but knew that it would not bring rest, only allow those thoughts to turn into nightmares he couldn't escape.

It was still before dawn, when Harry awoke startled and in a panicked cold sweat. Sitting up quickly, he took in the meager surrounding of his bedroom at Privet Drive, unmistakable even without his trademark wire framed glasses. His mind was still reeling through the recent images of his latest nightmare. Unsurprisingly, the memories of the battle at the Department of Mysteries had superseded his formerly worst nightmares of Cedric's death and Voldemort's rebirth, and had been the nightmares to finally startle the younger wizard awake in fear and pain.

Losing Sirius had forced Harry to hit a new low in his life both physically and in his dreams, but still he could never give in to them. His dreams would haunt him possibly forever, and definitely as long as Voldemort was still out there. Neither can live while the other survives. It came down to just him or Tom in the end, and that thought was still terrifying.

He could never allow Voldemort to win, and although he had absolutely no clue how to actually defeat the Dark Lord for good, he would have to find a way. He would have to put aside frivolous pleasures and fun, including his own ego and life, and dedicate his life to the destruction of the monster that had already destroyed his own life beyond repair.

No more meaningless games, slacking or laziness, and most importantly, no more brooding over his pathetic lot in life or the horrors it contained. He could no longer afford to waste precious time feeling sorry for himself or crying, or for anything that didn't help him prepare for the destiny set before him. No matter how much he resented it, complained about it, or hated it, he had a destiny to prepare for, and he could not rest until Riddle was dead.

This was the real problem now facing the still fifteen year old Harry Potter. He was supposed to face and hopefully destroy the greatest Dark Lord of the age, someone who had over fifty years more knowledge, experience, and power. How was he, a mere schoolboy



supposed to be an equal of the most feared and powerful Dark Wizard alive. It made no sense, and yet somewhere within him, he knew it to be true.

There were just too many coincidences to ignore completely. There were only two people who had dueled with Voldemort and lived, Dumbledore and himself. There was his scar and its connection to the Dark Lord; his wand was the only brother to Riddle's own. And of course, the Prophecy that forever binds their existence together.

While he was still absolutely clueless as to how he could become Voldemort's equal, he knew now that he could, he was the Chosen One of the Prophecy. His growing list of coincidences between himself and Tom Riddle could no longer be considered that, they were to be equals. They were both raised orphans, separated from the magical world, and yet outsiders to the muggle one as well. They were both abused growing up, and both became very introspective and independent from a very young age.

Well Harry's thoughts and feelings were independent, but he was not. They were both contained away from Hogwarts, their true home every summer amidst protests. They were both Parceltongues, and had a connection to the Founders of Hogwarts. Harry didn't know exactly what type of connection he had to Godric Gryffindor, but after hearing Dumbledore's explanation after the events of the Chamber of Secrets and his retrieval of the legendary sword, he knew there must be more to it. He knew Riddle was the Heir of Salazar Slytherin, and with all the other connections between them, Harry wouldn't be surprised to learn he was Gryffindor's Heir. It would be poetically fitting for the two ancient legends to have their dispute taken up a millennium later by their only descendants.

Seeing that dawn was fast approaching, Harry got out of bed, pulled on a pair of Dudley's old shorts from several years past and began his morning exercises of jumping-jacks, pushups and sit-ups. Over two hours later, and an utterly exhausted teenager returned to his bedroom after his morning shower to find three owls sitting and waiting patiently on his desk. Hedwig was easily the most recognizable, and the only familiar owl in the group. He was however;

drawn to the two unfamiliar ones, a silvery-grey owl with dark brown eyes and feather tips, and a common brown barn owl.

Attached to the leg of the silver-brown owl, was a good size package with a note on the outside in his friend Neville's handwriting. The barn owl also had a much smaller package with a note on it as well, but Harry couldn't recognize the handwriting although it did look relatively familiar. Hedwig seemed to recognize and be friendly with the barn owl, and sat quietly next to it. Figuring that it was safe to open, after he relieved all the owls of their burdens, he read the note attached.

Harry,

I am sorry, I wish I could have done more, or been the one to come see you, or even write sooner. I am truly sorry Harry. Please don't hate me for restraining you that night, but I couldn't afford to loose you too. I love you as if you were my own son, and I know that Sirius did the same. At least now we know that he is free from judgment and prejudices and can be with your parents again. Do not feel bad for him Harry; he died in battle fighting Death Eater scum, as he would have wanted to. And do not blame yourself, there is nothing worse than living with blame, believe me.

I do hope your okay; I sent you a book that your father gave me for my fifteenth birthday. It was incredibly helpful in maintaining my sanity over the years, and I hope that it can help you to. Your father was a great friend, and a damn brilliant wizard, he would be so proud of you, as am I. He would be glad that this book is still out there helping us both. I love you son, take care.

Remus

Harry could feel the oncoming tears begin to sting his eyes as he read through Remus' letter, but forced his composure through sheer will, and trudged ahead. It felt so good to hear from the last True Marauder, and to hear about how much he cared about him. While his letter was sad in tone, bringing up Sirius and his parents, Harry was glad to hear about them and Remus was the only one who knew them well enough to speak the truth.

He eagerly tore open the book his father had given to Remus over twenty years ago and let out a confused grunt as he read the title, *Meditation: Controlling Your Mind & Body*, by Sri Nagarjuna. At first it didn't make much sense, Remus had already seemed pretty calm in Snape's Pensieve of the fifth year O.W.L. tests. His dad and Sirius seemed to need the book more than the reserved werewolf. Ah werewolf, that's why Remus used and liked this book so much, to help him control his mind during the lunar transformations. Harry was eager to give the interesting and worn book a try, but decided to open his other mail from Neville so he could send his owl back to him with a pretty good Defense set of books.

Neville's family owl was truly beautiful; her silvery feathers sparkled in the morning light as she drank some water from Hedwig's bowl. Harry pulled the note off the box to find only a quick hello, before opening the box and finding three average size books sitting inside. He pulled out the Herbology books and set them on his trunk, and then grabbed the three volume set on Practical Defensive Magic. After a quick reply and thanks, Harry sent the books to Neville, in the same box his arrived in.

The final package was from Hermione, and contained a few books on both Arithmancy and Ancient Runes, with a note telling Harry to keep them all summer as she had already finished revising both subjects again. Harry was very satisfied that he now had some new things to read and study, and after eating some of Mrs. Weasley's food, he began to read the book Remus sent him. Three hours later and Harry was interrupted from reading by a small knock on his bedroom door before the locks started clicking open to reveal an excited Tonks and a nosey Aunt Petunia.

"Thank you Aunt Petunia," said Harry automatically as Tonks stepped in and shut the door in the face of the nosey horse-faced woman.

"Wotcher Harry," said Tonks cheerfully.

"Hi Tonks," replied Harry with a content smile on his face as he watched the excited pink-haired auror moving to sit on his bed and pull out two books from her backpack.

“Okay Harry, I brought you a book on Tai Chi, it’s kind of like yoga or stretching, but I think you’ll like it, and can do it inside. It’s supposed to be very peaceful and meditative, but also strengthens your body’s core and increases flexibility,” added Tonks as she handed the two books over to the eager eyed younger wizard. “You can’t tell anyone about the second book. It’s the Auror Training Manual: Occlumency/Legilimancy, and we’re not supposed to show these to anyone. Just be careful with that one, I don’t want to be reprimanded again if I can’t help it.”

“Again?” asked a very confused Harry who thought that Tonks was a great auror, and couldn’t understand why she would be in trouble.

“It’s a rather long story,” she replied as she stared at the younger wizard’s concerned look before flashing him a warm smile in appreciation of his thoughtfulness.

“Well, I don’t really have anywhere to go,” urged Harry with a slight plea in his voice as he returned the smile causing Tonks to giggle.

“Of course ...,” she began laughingly, “well, to make a long story short, I’m on probation for being in the Order of the Phoenix.”

“What?” exclaimed a shocked Harry.

“Yeah, when Director Bones found out Kingsley and I were both in the Order, she put us on probation,” she added nonchalantly.

“Oh my god Tonks, I am so sorry. This is my fault, it was the scene from the Pensieve wasn’t it?” rambled Harry in a guilty desperation.

“Harry, stop it!” she yelled, which immediately silenced the young wizard. “It is not your fault. I joined the Order, I joined the battle that night of my own will, and it was my decision. You got that?”

“Yes,” mumbled Harry uneasily, causing Tonks to elaborate even further to ease his worry.

“Look, you should know that I requested a leave of absence after that night at the Department of Mysteries. However, because of You-

Know-Who's return, they wouldn't grant my leave. But now that I am on probation, I only need to go in a short time on Sunday, and I got the leave I wanted and needed for my own piece of mind. So, if anything, I should be thanking you, okay."

"Okay ..." began Harry shyly, before asking a question that came up in his head quickly and scared him slightly. "So are you still going to keep coming to visit me?"

"Yes, of course," started Tonks reassuringly, "I really like spending time with you Harry, I think it's really good for me."

"Really?" asked a happy teenager as he smiled widely at the spiky pink-haired auror.

"Yeah ...talking to you has been really good for me. I felt so guilty after losing Si-Sirius ...I thought that everyone would hate me for getting beat by that foul bitch," she spat out the end with a venom and anger in her voice that had Harry slightly worried about the young auror.

"It's not your fault Tonks," spoke Harry slowly and warmly as he stepped forward and rested his hand reassuringly on her shoulder as he tried to comfort her with his warm touch and smile.

"I know that now. Just like it's not your fault either," she replied as she tried to match his warmth and sincerity with her own violet eyes as she stared unblinkingly into the warm depths of his bright green ones.

"Yeah I know ..." sighed Harry as he dropped his gaze to the floor and his arm returned to his side.

"So how was the visit with Bill?" she asked, sensing the need to change the subject as she reached out and repeated Harry's earlier sympathetic action forcing the teenager's head to snap up and look in her eyes.

"It was great, we played chess and he brought a picnic basket full of food from Mrs. Weasley," he replied happily, his eyes lighting up in excitement.

“Molly said there’s enough food in there for over a week. Do you still have any of her ham pies left, I’m starved?” she asked while matching the younger wizard’s excited face.

“Yeah, I think there’s a couple left, they’re my favorite,” said Harry as he went to the enchanted picnic basket and began pulling out two ham pies and a jug of pumpkin juice.

He and Tonks sat and enjoyed a friendly lunch where they talked about what Harry was still planning on studying. Tonks also elaborated on Tai Chi and meditation as well as other mental exercises to help with Occlumency, although she was never very good at it herself. He also learned that Tonks was a big fan of Ancient Runes, and would offer any help he needed in learning the new subject. Also, that Bill, as a curse-breaker knew an even greater amount about Runes since they were essential in his line of work.

His time with Tonks passed far too quickly, and he found that he really enjoyed spending it with her. Tonks was fun, smart, treated him like an equal, and quite attractive if he admitted it to himself. He had spent over three hours locked in an intense and enjoyable conversation with the young auror, and found himself often staring at her face and sparkling violet eyes. She was gorgeous, even though as a metemorphmagus he knew this wasn’t her normal appearance, but still there was just something about her that attracted him. He happily sat with a wide smile and content look as he spent the afternoon enjoying her company.

Tonks, for her part was having a wonderful time as well. She was happily chatting away with Harry at a comfort level she rarely reached with anyone, and was amazed at the young teenager’s maturity. Even at twenty-two, she had never been that mature, although she also hadn’t dealt with everything the wizard before her had. Yet still he was sincere, honest, amazingly caring, and a great person to talk with. She didn’t even want to think about his startling emerald eyes, that sparkled when he was happy and showed his emotions better than any mood stone ever could.

There was something about him, the caring emotion in his eyes, the way he carried himself so humbly, and acted so strong in the face of all he had put up with that drove her crazy. It made her heart beat faster, filled her with a wonderful feeling of warmth, and would normally cause her to blush if she wasn't trying to control it so hard with her metamorph abilities. She had never felt anything quite like it, and yet she knew exactly what it meant.

The big problem now, was that she was having a hard time admitting it to herself, as if it wouldn't be true until she did. She knew how wrong it was for someone 'her age' to be attracted to a teenager, even if it was the Boy-Who-Lived, and struggled to squish those thoughts and feelings away and concentrate on just being the friend's they both desperately needed.

After Tonks left on Monday, Harry returned to the book Meditation, from Remus until he finished it just before his evening loo break. After eating some of Mrs. Weasley's roast, Harry eagerly grabbed the Auror Training Manual: Occlumency/Legilimancy that Tonks had just left him and began to read the introduction with hardly a pause. After the author outlined the aims of the book, he gave an introductory description of the different methods of both Legilimancy and Occlumency. It then gave a series of exercises within meditation that would help you organize first, and then clear your mind.

For some people, after entering the meditative state and searching inward to your mind, you will find the representation of what you perceive your mind to be. For some it's a series of file cabinets or bookshelves, an office or den, a prison or fortress. For most people this room is their own personal reflection or visual representation of your mind. Let's call this room your 'brain library' since it contains the entirety of your personal knowledge. Here is where Occlumency begins, for it is here you will organize your thoughts, dreams, ideas, emotions, and so on. With better understanding of one's own mind, you can then move on to defenses of the mind.

After finishing the first chapter, Harry was overwhelmed at the numerous ways to organize one's mind before it could be cleared, and silently cursed Snape for the hundredth time for not giving any more instructions than a simple 'clear your mind Potter'. He was

intrigued with the idea of a brain library and understood the importance of knowing your own mind better. According to the book, an organized mind learns and reads quicker, retains information better, requires less sleep, and can help you focus and connect to your magic, all good benefits of the very personal and difficult art known as Occlumency.

After a late snack of the leftover ham pies from lunch with Tonks, Harry spent several hours going through a great many of the different meditation techniques outlined in the book from Remus to help calm his mind. After he felt fairly relaxed, he decided to move on to the techniques to allow you to better connect with your body and magic, something the book mentioned was helpful for anyone. After a short while, Harry finally managed to look in towards his magical core, and was absolutely sickened by what he saw. He looked upon his core for a long while in trying to figure out what exactly he was seeing, and when he realized it, he was utterly nauseous.

His core, or what he assumed was his core, was a small and dense swirling of pure bright white magical energy, slightly resembling the human heart with veins of his magic spreading out through small channels throughout his body. The problem was in the even larger foul dark black tendrils of magical energy that surrounded and constricted around the white core, weakening the vein tendrils as they left the core and filtered throughout the body. The angry black tendrils literally choked and suffocated his core, waging a constant battle upon the core's surface.

The sight was utterly revolting to Harry who couldn't even approach the core because of the angry black tendrils he knew he didn't want to touch. As a slight panic began to set in, Harry could faintly hear a light rhythmic beating sound that reminded him of his accidental magical pulsating incident the week before. Thinking of the last outburst however, only brought his thoughts back to what first triggered it, the grief and love he felt for Sirius.

THUMP

The recognizable thump resonated from within Harry, as he too was within himself it shook him at his foundation. At first it terrified him as



he still watched his magical core and the angry black tendrils reacted violently, thinking that they were the cause. That viewpoint however, was soon discarded as the next thumping pulse broke through the suffocating black tendrils, and sent his own core's pure white magical energy exploding throughout his body. He knew instantly somehow what had happened the other day and what was happening now. His core was trying to purge the foreign black magic from his body, which explained Tonks' reaction to the magical outburst last week.

Realizing the benefits of trying to rid this disgusting foreign black magic, Harry tried to aid the pulsating rhythmic explosions of his inner core as it tried to expel the vast amount of dark tendrils. Over the next several minutes, Harry's body lay motionless on his bed, as sweat formed and dripped off the meditating teenager in buckets as he inwardly aided his magical core in the fight against what he believed to be Voldemort's residual black magic. It had the same violently disgusting feel as the Dark Lord himself when he touched Harry's forehead after his rebirth, and Harry knew he needed to do anything he could to rid himself of that feeling.

He didn't know where it came from, either from the killing curse as a child, or the dark ritual to resurrect his body, or even the possession of Harry just a few weeks ago, but it didn't lessen his desire to rid it from his body. Harry continued to push with all his willpower to rid his core of Voldemort's suffocating dark magic until he could do no more and quietly blackness enclosed all around him and he slipped into unconsciousness...

He was surrounded by darkness, he couldn't see, he could hardly breathe, the darkness was squeezing him, suffocating him as he struggled uselessly against it. Angry black tendrils of magical energy wrapped around him like devil's snare, destroying his fight, but he still wouldn't surrender to the darkness. He thrashed and screamed wildly, using any remaining energy to push away the constricting darkness and soon felt it starting to give way. With a final push of sheer will, the black tendrils of dark magic were expelled in a final explosion of bright white light, leaving Harry panting and hunched over on a hard surface inside his body, protecting his magical core.

‘You can try all you want Potter,’ echoed the breathy and cold voice of Tom Riddle all around him, ‘but you will never be rid of me completely,’ he finished as a ghost image of his form appeared before Harry for only an instant before it became a single tendril of the darkest and blackest magic he had ever seen, and then pierced Harry’s forehead without warning.

“AHHHHH!” screamed Harry as he shot up in bed panting and sweating, and immediately clutched the lightening bolt scar on his forehead, that forever connected him to his nemesis, Lord Voldemort.

The pain that raced through his scar was almost unbearable, and brought tears to the young wizard’s eyes as he applied as much pressure as he could to his throbbing head and scar. Pulling his hand back for a second to wipe off the sweat, he instantly noticed that it wasn’t sweat it was covered in, but blood ...his scar was bleeding. He tried to block out the pain and began to breathe deeply using his newly learned meditation techniques to help calm his racing heart, aching body, and beyond painful head and scar. His meditation was almost immediately interrupted as there was a rather forceful knock on the house’s front door that quickly brought him back to the present.

Albus Dumbledore was sitting at his desk finally getting a chance to catch up on some much needed paperwork after the busy week of many meetings, both with Director Bones about Harry, and Minister Fudge about Voldemort’s return. While Amelia had remained true and kept Fudge out of the loop regarding Mr. Potter, the Minister was still being a stick in the mud about the Ministry’s roll in this war. He had failed to act last year, and now that he finally admitted the Dark lord’s return; he was still dragging his feet on every move. He still hadn’t done anything about the Dementors in Azkaban, underage laws, Umbridge’s Educational Decrees, and still blamed most of the problems on young Harry. He just seemed to have it in for the young wizard, and not for the first time, Dumbledore realized that someone as popular as The-Boy-Who-Lived would always be a threat to someone like Cornelius Fudge.

Just as he finished the last of the list of new students to be receiving their Hogwarts’ letters, the same silver instrument from last week that he had just managed to fix began pulsating again ...and again.

Before he could do anything, his fireplace flashed green and the scared head of Auror Nymphadora Tonks appeared amidst the flames.

"Dumbledore, Harry's pulsating again, it's just like last time," she finished quickly despite her discomfort of having these horrible feelings of pain and evil flood her senses with each pulse.

"Step back Nymphadora, I'm coming through," he replied steadily and calmly as only Dumbledore could, hoping to figure out what was going on with his favorite student, and better understand the magic he believed to be Voldemort's at work.

After stepping through the Floo in his office and arriving in Mrs. Figg's living room, Albus immediately felt what could only be described as a sickening jolt of the darkest magic he had ever encountered. Nymphadora didn't do the feelings justice in likening it to a Dementor, although similar, this was much worse. His face paled as he remembered the current source of these pulses which were already starting to grow rapidly in speed and size, and he was terrified to think of what this might mean for the boy he loved like a grandson.

"Nymphadora, follow me," he spoke with as much force as he could muster in between the disgusting waves of black magic that permeated the entire air even several houses away.

After ten minutes, they still could not approach the house because of the foul dark magic crashing through everything around, them included. Then with an almighty flash of bright white light that completely illuminated the post-midnight sky, a final wave of power pushed through them all. At first it was worse than all the previous one's, but was quickly followed up with a wave more powerful than all the others combined. It radiated through their bodies, filling it with an overwhelming feeling of warmth and love.

The final wave however, was so strong that it knocked over both the Headmaster and the Metamorph Auror backwards to the ground. They stayed on the lawn for several minutes, unable to, or unwilling to move after the incredible display of power, and the lingering joyous feeling of love that still permeated their magical beings.

“W-W-What w-w-was that?” asked Tonks wide-eyed after several minutes of just lying comfortably in the soft grass she landed in.

“I-I’m not really sure ...we need to talk to Harry ...come on,” spoke Dumbledore who took a few moments to stand up and collect himself and get his bearings before the two approached the front door of Number Four, only to be interrupted by a pain-filled tortured scream from The-Boy-Who-Lived.

“AHHHHH!”

Dumbledore, followed by Tonks, raced the last steps to the front door and began knocking forcefully, despite the fact that it was now just past one a.m. It was a minute later after continuous loud banging; that Vernon Dursley answered the door purple faced and puffed out like a balloon about to burst.

“NOW SEE HERE. I WILL NOT,” started Vernon before he was just shoved to the side by a young pink haired woman who had been visiting the ‘freak’ all summer.

He watched as the ancient man raced up the stairs without a sound, and was astounded at his speed and mobility for someone his age. He was brought back to the present as the spiky pink haired little tart raced up the stairs behind the white bearded wizard. He shut the door quickly, hoping none of the neighbors spotted the ‘freaks’ that showed up in the middle of the night like hooligans, before returning to his wife sputtering under his breath angrily as he stomped loudly.

With a powerful wave of Dumbledore’s hand, all six of the locks on Harry’s bedroom door fell to pieces instantly, clattering onto the wood floor loudly through the mostly quiet house. He pushed open the door to find Harry lying back in bed clutching his hands to his face, his legs tangled up violently in his lone blanket, and his skin ghostly pale. Dumbledore and Tonks each went to separate sides of the bed in a flash, and were instantly concerned over the sight of blood on Harry’s forehead and hands trying to cover his scar and keep pressure on it.

“Harry, are you alright?” spoke Albus Dumbledore clearly as he leaned over the wizard with concern filling his watery blue eyes.

“M-My scar ...it hurts,” he gasped out between heavy steady breaths.

“Harry, here, take this pain relief potion,” replied Tonks who quickly retrieved a small vile of the orangish-red potion from her belt before handing it to Harry who knocked it back greedily and without hesitation.

“Thanks ...Tonks,” breathed out Harry thankfully after a few seconds when the potion slowly began to take effect, relieving only some of the ache in his body and head.

“No problem Harry,” spoke a watery eyed but still smiling young auror as she looked down at the wizard she had gotten to know so much better this past week.

“Harry, can you tell me what happened?” asked the still concerned voice of his Headmaster.

Harry spent the next fifteen minute or so explaining first his new meditation techniques, and then what he discovered when meditating on his magical core. He then explained the struggle to rid his core of the nasty black magic of Voldemort, and the pulsating waves that had occurred for the second time in a week. He finished with the weird dream meeting with Voldemort, and his final words before he became the black tendril of magic and pierced his forehead, causing his scar to split open and wake him up screaming.

Dumbledore was truly amazed as Harry recounted the tale, and what he discovered about his magic and the connection to Voldemort, filled him with hope. His story also confirmed the dark magic waves or pulses of Voldemort that he felt both times this week, as well as the final powerful wave of Harry’s own love based magical energy. He was proud of the success Harry had in expelling the dark magic that was suffocating his core and probably weakening it considerably if what he understood was true. But, he was happiest to learn that Harry had figured this out as meditation exercises designed to help

him learn Occlumency, an art he thought would greatly benefit the young wizard, as it had him for so many years.

“I’m so proud of you Harry, what you have done is truly remarkable. Even with his presence in the scar, you were able to weaken the hold his magic had over you. This is a wonderful first step,” spoke Dumbledore warmly to the young wizard as his twinkle returned full-force into his crystal blue eyes.

“Thank you sir –yawn- but I feel so tired and sleepy. I don’t know –yawn- if I can stay –yawn- awake,” finished Harry shyly as he closed his eyes and rested his head comfortably on the thin pillow falling asleep almost at once.

“Nymphadora” started Dumbledore, oblivious to her flinching at the sound of her first name, “could you keep watch in here tonight. I will bring Poppy with me tomorrow morning to make sure he truly is alright after all that magic going through his body.”

“Sure thing sir, I’ll stay right here until you return,” replied Tonks easily and with a slightly happy grin as she realized that she would be there to greet the young wizard and help him if he woke up.

“Thank you Nymphadora. I’ll be here by nine,” replied Dumbledore as he got up and left the small bedroom, vanishing the broken remains of the locks that once imprisoned Harry on his way out the door.

Dumbledore slowly returned to Mrs. Figg’s house to fill her in and return to Hogwarts, thanking his lucky stars that the Ministry had not been able to fix the magical sensors on Privet Drive. According to Amelia the other day, they had tried to fix them, but couldn’t, and with everything else going on, it wasn’t a high priority. Or at least until Fudge found out that the sensor on his least favorite underage wizard wasn’t working.

Once Dumbledore had left Privet Drive, Tonks quickly went to the bathroom and grabbed a bowl and filled it with cold water before returning to Harry’s side. Not knowing about the lack of magical sensors, and not being as skilled as Dumbledore to use undetectable or wandless magic, Tonks found a clean shirt. After getting it wet, she

started cleaning away the blood by wiping his hands and then his forehead clean very gently and slowly. While making a last wipe of the forehead, Harry's hand came up reflexively and covered hers, pushing the cold damp cloth to his forehead with Tonks' hand sandwiched between.

"Thank you Dora," whispered Harry half mumbling and half-sleeping as he held her hand tightly against the cold damp cloth on his forehead.

Tonks' breath caught in her throat, and her chest and stomach constricted tightly as she heard the feeling in Harry's voice, and the nickname he called her. The smile on her face told the true story of how much that meant to the young auror as she just watched Harry fall back asleep peacefully. After a few minutes, Harry's hand fell back to his side as he fell deeper into his slumber, but Tonks continued to apply the cold damp cloth to his scarred forehead soothingly and happily.

Harry woke up just after dawn more rested and comfortable than he could ever remember being, and after opening his eyes, he knew why. Tonks was lightly running her hands through his hair with one hand, while the other still held a cold cloth to his forehead as she sat next to him in his bed. Her hands felt so good in his hair, and because of the damp cloth his scar and forehead was cool and much less painful than when he fell asleep. Her violet eyes were slightly glazed over as she watched her finger's progress through his hair, and didn't notice the waking wizard who used the opportunity to look up happily at the friendly and very beautiful young auror.

"Good morning Tonks," croaked out Harry with a raspy and dry throat as he smiled up at the pretty pink haired metamorph.

"Oh ...wotcher Harry," she replied happily and somewhat embarrassed at getting caught playing with his hair as a slight blush tried to fight it's way to her cheeks. "How are you feeling?"

"Much better actually, I mean ...my body's still real sore, but I feel more rested than I have in a long time," replied Harry. "Thanks Tonks."

“Don’t mention it Harry,” started Tonks sheepishly. “I’m glad you’re feeling better,” she finished as she playfully ruffled his hair before removing the cool cloth from his forehead.

“Yeah ...thanks,” replied Harry as he unsuccessfully tried to flatten his unruly hair and glared at the now giggling Tonks at his unsuccessful attempts.

“You know Harry, if you want ...I can cut your hair today ...it would be fun,” replied a now semi-excited Tonks who would love to try different styles with Harry’s crazy and wild black hair.

“Good luck Tonks,” started Harry nonchalantly, “but I haven’t had or needed a haircut in years. And the last one I do remember grew back overnight I was so embarrassed to be seen with it.

“What?!” shrieked a wide-eyed and slightly hysterical looking Tonks.

“Yeah, Aunt Petunia once shaved-“

“Harry, does your hair ever grow or change?” Tonks asked exasperatedly, cutting Harry off with an eagerness that he had never seen in the fun-spirited young auror.

“Um ...er ...no ...not really...m-my last haircut was when I was eight, and my hair always looks like this,” replied Harry as he ran a hand absentmindedly through said hair causing it to stick up even more than seemed possible.

“Y-Y-You’re a ...a m-meta-metamorph!” stuttered Tonks in absolute shock at listening to Harry’s tale, and knowing she had to be right, seeing as there were no spells to permanently re-grow hair or stop it from growing.

“What?!” shrieked Harry as it was his turn to stare dumbly in shock, and splutter in disbelief.

“Well ...there’s no other explanation for not needing haircuts for eight years Harry,” started Tonks normally before squealing in delight. “We



are going to have so much fun training up your abilities. I always hoped I'd get a chance to meet another metamorph. I wonder what you'll be capable of doing?" she finished rapidly and excitedly with a large smile spread across her pretty heart-shaped face and a determined glare in her now color cycling eyes.

"Slow down Tonks," started Harry who immediately felt bad at the dejected look that crossed the young auror's face. "I'm sorry; I didn't mean it like that. I'm just too tired right now, but I am excited to learn about being a metamorph if you really think I am one, just not now okay?"

"Sure Harry," replied Tonks, her smile returning to its original excited warmth.

"So what is the plan today?" asked Harry after a slight pause in the conversation where he found himself staring at the colorful violet eyes that Tonks settled on, and her happy face.

"You need to rest. Dumbledore is coming by at nine this morning with Madam Pomfrey. I guess everything will depend on what she says after that," replied Tonks sympathetically and now somewhat nervously under the intensity of his gaze.

"Oh ...alright," sighed Harry resigned to his fate with the Hogwarts Healer.

"Do you want some breakfast?" asked Tonks warmly, trying to help lift Harry's mood while being stuck in bed all morning.

"Sure, that sounds good," replied Harry as a small smile returned to his lips at the sight of the happy auror whose smile grew even wider.

After a small but filling breakfast, Harry and Tonks spent over two hours talking happily and laughing loudly, enjoying one another's company. At five minutes to nine there was a knock on the front door followed by the entrance of his Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore and the school nurse, Madam Poppy Pomfrey. Poppy looked like an old time muggle doctor, complete with a black carrying case and white coat, or in her case a white cloak.

"Ah Harry my boy," started Dumbledore with a friendly twinkle in his concerned crystal blue eyes, "how are you feeling this morning?"

"Much better sir," replied Harry with a small smile still on his flushed face. "Aside from the slight tingling in my scar, I feel better than I ever have before."

"Really ...that is excellent news," started Albus Dumbledore with a friendly smile on his own old and wrinkled face. "Tell me Harry, have you gone back to meditating on your core to see the results of last night's efforts?"

"Not yet sir, I didn't want to push myself until I got the clear from you and Madam Pomfrey, and Tonks said you'd be here soon enough," replied Harry honestly, earning smiles from everyone in the room.

"I see you're finally starting to take your health seriously Mr. Potter," started Madam Pomfrey with a knowing smile as she approached one of her favorite and most treated patients, "it's about time."

"I have some very good news too, that I discovered as a result of last nights ...episode," started Dumbledore with the full-blown twinkle in his eyes that seemed to be on overdrive since he arrived that morning. "It seems that the Ministry's Magical Sensors for the entire area have been temporarily un-repairable, as well as their underage magical signature detector attuned to you Harry.

"What does that mean?" asked Harry thinking that he might have an idea, but just not believing he could ever be that lucky.

"Basically, it means that for the time being, the Ministry is unable to detect your magical signature, or any magic performed in the nearby vicinity," started Dumbledore slowly allowing it to register and really sink in, before he had to rein it in a little. "However, this will only be a temporary solution. At the time they are too busy trying to prepare for a war that they are just now admitting to exist, but that will not last for long. They will most likely have the sensors back working by the end of July, after their yearly maintenance examinations, but until then, you are free to do magic."

“Brilliant,” cheered Harry in excitement.

“Albus, how could you suggest such a thing?” demanded Poppy in shock as she glared at her boss, and the Leader of the Order.

“This is too valuable an opportunity to let pass my dear, I hope you understand,” placated Albus calmly to the still glaring medi-witch as she prepared to run her scans over the boy in question.

“Harry, I do hope you can continue to lay low here for the time being. Try not to draw any unnecessary attention to yourself, but I will know in advance when they are able to fix the sensors, so don’t worry, you will have a warning before the Ministry manages to monitor the area again,” finished Albus with a very large and knowing smile on his face that was reflected in the face of the younger wizard, although his smile was much more mischievous.

“Y-Yes sir, thank you sir,” stuttered Harry practically bouncing in place while still lying on bed now being examined by Madam Pomfrey.

“You seem to be in perfect shape Mr. Potter; I don’t know what to say. You’re healthier than you’ve ever been; even though you still need to put on some weight, but the weird thing is the magical scan ...its readings were off the charts,” spoke Madam Pomfrey after she finished her magical scans of The-Boy-Who-Lived, and looked to Albus for help in understanding.

“Really?” asked Harry skeptically.

“I would not underestimate yourself, Harry. If last night was anything to go by, you are indeed a very powerful wizard, with maybe more raw power than few wizards alive, myself and Tom included,” answered Albus confidently to the still somewhat skeptical wizard in bed, trying to instill the confidence in him that he gave to so many others.

‘I’m not that powerful,’ thought Harry sadly and almost ashamed to admit it, even to himself.

“Yes, Harry you are,” replied Albus with a warm smile and a proud gaze as he answered his favorite student’s unasked, but well projected question to the highly trained Legilimens, before sitting down and telling the young wizard a story of his own youth and magical discovery.

“...and I do hope you enjoy yourself a little bit,” Dumbledore finished with a warm smile and a gentle pat of the young wizard’s head as he stood to leave after the short visit.

“And do try to stay out of trouble Mr. Potter,” added Madam Pomfrey with a small smile twitching at the corners of her lips as she followed the Headmaster out of Privet Drive.

“Harry, why don’t you take a shower, I’ll go pick us up some lunch and be right back,” spoke Tonks excitedly, now with the ability to do all the magic she was used to, already looking around the meager bedroom for ideas.

“A shower sounds so good right now,” added Harry, who quickly got out of bed and grabbed his towel and few toiletries and headed down and across the hall to the loo.

Harry enjoyed a long relaxing shower, where he concentrated on his magical core, trying to get a good look at it now. It didn’t take very long before Harry was standing in front of the much larger mass of bright white magical energy, with wide open channels spreading out all over his body. It was an incredibly invigorating feeling, and warmed and strengthened Harry from the inside of his being. Not having the time to spend playing with it, or trying anything else, Harry left his core and returned to the present. Stepping out of the shower, Harry dried off, brushed his teeth, and uselessly ran his hands through his untidy hair, before returning to his bedroom, and freezing at the sight.

“Bloody brilliant,” he whispered to himself in disbelief as he looked around in awe at the enormous space his once pitiful bedroom had already become.

“Welcome to your new apartment Harry,” squealed Tonks excitedly as she turned around at Harry’s entrance and graced the younger wizard with a bright smile that tied his stomach in knots and set his blood racing.

AN: Thanks reviewers and readers, I have had so much fun with this story.

## Chapter 5

"Bloody hell Tonks, this room is enormous," spoke the stunned and awestruck raven haired teenager as he glanced at the large open space that used to be the smallest bedroom at Number Four Privet Drive.

"But I'm not even close to being done. I've only expanded the place twice, it's a pretty easy spell Harry, do you want to give it a try?" added Tonks with a happy smile as she looked at the still dripping wet teenager.

"Really?" asked an excited Harry, "I'd love to, just let me put some clothes on okay?"

"If you have to Harry," whined Tonks teasingly and with a friendly wink and a playful pout on her pretty heart shaped face. "Here, wear these, they should fit better now," she added as she watched him stare blankly around the cavernous room looking for his things.

Harry took the blue jeans and black t-shirt from Tonks, and went back to the bathroom while Tonks prepared for his first lesson and activity of the day. When he returned dressed, Tonks had piled all of Dudley's old and broken toys by the door and out of the way and the two ate their pizza quickly excited to get started. She then began explaining the room expansion charm, the incantation and necessary wand movements and focal points. After ten minutes, Harry felt pretty comfortable with the spell, and was eager to do some magic at Privet Drive without getting caught.

"Dilato cella," he spoke clearly as he outlined the back wall and corners with a soft orange glow, extending it backwards and almost doubling the size of the already larger room. "Wow!"

"Good job Harry. It took me two spells to do what you just accomplished in one, although charms were never my best, I guess I've always been into Transfiguration," replied Tonks proudly as she smiled warmly at the younger wizard causing his cheeks to blush slightly.

“Thanks ...I think,” mumbled Harry still a little unsure of the power he put into that spell and the rush of energy that sparkled inside his body, while also fighting down his blush as he returned the pretty auror’s smile.

Tonks then spent the next few hours walking Harry through first the expansion, then plumbing and wiring charms, after transfiguring several walls, the placement of which Harry had little to no input in. Tonks arranged the large warehouse type space into several rooms, including a large main room or den with a small muggle-style kitchenette, a large open room for training, and an average size bedroom with a small closet and modest bathroom. They then moved on to transfiguring all of Harry’s new furniture out of Dudley’s old toys, and the room’s original furniture. The placement of the furniture was able to finally help Harry understand the layout of his new apartment, and was quite eager to help and learn the more difficult transfigurations, all while enjoying one of the best days on Privet Drive in a long time.

Tonks, for her part, was an incredible teacher, very patient, kind and informative. She was exceptionally skilled in Transfiguration, and was able to help Harry get a grasp on much of it, while he quickly learned to excel beyond her in charms easily. By the time for dinner, they had set up all the furniture in the bedroom and den, leaving the training room for later, and they were exhausted. The den now housed a large sofa and coffee table by an open grate fireplace, a desk and bookshelves up against the wall by the door to the Dursleys, and a kitchen counter in the opposite corner with only a few muggle appliances including a small refrigerator and an oven with a stove-top.

They ended up eating a very large dinner after all the magic they had been doing throughout the day, and had finished most of the food from Mrs. Weasley’s enchanted picnic basket. Harry alone had been eating more than he ever remembered, even at Hogwarts; he never really ate that much, except at certain feasts, but today he felt like he could have ate on pace with Ron. Plus, now he had his own little kitchen that he could stock however he wanted once he figured out exactly how he was going to do that.

“Tonks,” started Harry questioningly as they were both finishing their large meal, “do you think we could go grocery shopping tomorrow?”

“Don’t you worry about it Harry,” replied Tonks happily. “I’ll go by the store on my way here tomorrow morning, so we can get an early start on the day. There’s still some stuff we need to do to get your new apartment ready.”

“Really, thanks Tonks,” replied Harry excitedly, “can I give you a small list, I’d like to cook something special one night.”

“No problem, as long as you’ll make enough for me,” she answered back teasingly while returning the teenage wizard’s smile.

“Of course I’ll make enough for you, that’s what makes it special,” replied Harry who instantly turned Weasley red as he realized what he just said out loud. “I-I ...mean ...I-I’ve never cooked for s-someone ...I-I wanted to ...or cooked something I wanted,” finished Harry hastily, despite his earlier embarrassing slip.

The smile that lit up Tonks’ face at hearing Harry’s answer and watching him stutter embarrassedly, brightened the entire room, and when Harry finally looked up after his embarrassed head hanging, his stomach instantly starting doing back-flips and somersaults. She looked so pretty when she smiled, that Harry absentmindedly stared intently into her sparkling violet eyes causing his own to glaze over as his smile tried to match hers, and he lost all possibility for speech as his lips and mouth dried out quickly.

“I’d really like that Harry,” responded Tonks honestly, finally breaking the growing silence and eye contact as she embarrassedly lowered her own gaze to the floor to help her fight the oncoming blush.

‘I’m an auror, an adult. I don’t get mushy over boys’ she kept repeating to herself if only to try and convince herself of the fact through repetition alone. ‘Don’t look in his eyes, don’t look in his eyes, you can’t handle it,’ continued her inner dialogue during the moments following her pronouncement.



"Me too," breathed out Harry, barely audible, but nevertheless heard by the room's other occupant who had to strengthen and renew her inner chants as her heart began racing excitedly, despite her many attempts to ignore it.

"Can you make up that grocery list, I better get going," replied Tonks somewhat hastily as her eyes met the intense emerald one's and she knew she had to leave, "you know ...do rounds through the neighborhood ...and check in with Mrs. Figg."

"Oh, okay," replied Harry as he scrambled to write a quick list of groceries before handing it over to the young auror. "I guess I'll see you tomorrow then," finished Harry slightly disappointed that Tonks had to leave, last night having been so great having her there to comfort him and play with his hair when he awoke.

"Sure Harry, see you in the morning," she finished with a friendly smile, while still avoiding looking into his eyes as she quickly left the new apartment at Privet Drive.

Harry was slightly disappointed after Tonks left, curious to know if he had done something or said something to upset her, but the feeling slowly passed as he realized he had the whole apartment to himself. He could decorate it any way he wanted, he could do any magic he wanted, this was the freedom he was so desperately looking for and needed so badly right now for his own piece of mind. Glancing around the large main room den, Harry had a great idea on how to decorate the wall space above his modest stone fireplace.

Harry had watched, hiding up in his room at the end of last term, his roommate Dean Thomas magically paint several muggle style paintings for his friends and relatives. Harry had been mesmerized at the time to see muggle art so well done, and painted magically using your wand almost as your brush. With nothing but time and a prime spot of empty wall space, Harry collected the first picture from his photo album after a long moment of reflection, and set to work in front of the cozy little fireplace, above its stone mantle.

It was well after midnight, and several failed attempts that Harry was putting the finishing touches onto his almost completed wall mural.

Once he had got the basic spell work and wand movements down, he greatly enjoyed the process of magical painting, and used the time spent to continue working on different breathing techniques and meditation methods as he painted. The magical photograph of his godfather and parents on their wedding day, seemingly knew what was going on, and basically posed and remained still when Harry referenced the picture for his new painting.

When Harry had finally finished, his arms and shoulders were beyond tired and sore from all the wand waving, which he felt adequately mimicked the brushstrokes of a muggle painter. Taking a few steps back to get a better view of the completed painting, he gasped in awe at the incredible representation of his parents on their wedding day, with the handsome best man, Sirius Black at their side. He continued to stare unblinkingly at the painting for a long time, with a mixture of emotions burning through his intense emerald eyes; sorrow, pain, regret, grief, guilt, longing, kindness, warmth, happiness ...and love. Even without their magical essences imbued into the painting like most magical portraits, the figures almost seemed alive with the very realistic expressions and emotional filled eyes that the artist help portray.

Silent tears of loss and love fell freely from the emotion filled eyes of the teenage wizard as he looked upon the happy and innocent faces of his own parents and godfather at the tender ages of 19 to 20. Before the Prophecy, before their betrayal, before Voldemort destroyed their lives and left their son orphaned and alone, with the weight of the wizarding world covering his scarred forehead. Watching their innocence and happiness was heartwarming for the teenager who had never really experienced the same feelings in his own life, and caused him to call out into the night to any deity that would listen to grant him that same happiness one day.

He knew he would never have that happiness for as long as Voldemort was still alive, and renewed his commitment to himself that he would need to prepare to face the destiny laid upon him. Curling up on the comfortable sofa that Tonks had transfigured today, Harry started a small fire in the hearth, and summoned one of the newly improved blankets from his bed feeling the need to be wrapped in something. He sat for a long while in front of the fire, lazily staring up

at the large mural painting of Sirius, James, and Lily as he slowly let his mind wander and his body rest peacefully.

Harry was momentarily worried, waking up stiff and sore just before dawn, when he tried to remember where he was. Upon opening his eyes, he saw the blurry remnants of the dying fire's embers and realized he hadn't slept long, but would be sleeping no more today. After feeling around him, he located his glasses and put them on, bringing the den of his new apartment into clearer view. His gaze almost instantly fell onto the newly, happily painted faces of his parents and godfather, bringing a large smile and a warm comforting feeling to his chest.

Whipping the tiredness out of his eyes and stretching his still sore joints and muscles, Harry decided to start his morning workout, and made his way to the large bare room off of his bedroom that was the new and still unfinished training or workout room. It was large enough, that Harry started with a slight jog around the room's perimeter, before stretching some more and moving onto the weights that Tonks had brought a few days ago. It was almost two full hours later, that Harry dragged his tired and sweaty body to the shower in his apartments own bathroom, where he remained for over a half-hour until he was willing to stop the calming hot water and get dressed and ready for the day.

Stepping out of his bedroom directly into the large den, he noticed Tonks already in the kitchen unloading countless bags of groceries into the cupboards and icebox. His breath instantly hitched and got caught in his throat as he watched the very attractive auror in a short tight black miniskirt and equally tight hot pink tank-top, putting the groceries away in a way that just demanded attention. His stomach clenched into a knot of nerves as he stared open mouthed at Tonks' legs and body in front of him but turned towards the kitchen cupboards, and he couldn't seem to make his mind work beyond the infatuated staring he was currently locked into. An overly extended upward reach by Tonks, allowed her already small skirt to slide further up her gorgeously toned legs giving Harry a memory he would not soon forget as he watched her dead sexy legs and firm backside, making him light-headed as his blood seemingly refused traveling to his brain. The dizziness that followed from the combination of a sexy

woman's body and Harry's fatigue from the workout mixed with his need for food caused him to stumble and wobble where he stood.

"U-Uh ...hi Tonks," choked Harry with great difficulty getting his brain and mouth to work, as he leaned against the back of the sofa for support.

"Oh, Wotcher Harry," replied a startled Tonks who had jumped and spun around in the same motion at the sound of Harry's voice, only to get tangled up in her own feet and crash to the floor clumsily causing both her and Harry to start laughing.

"I-I'm sorry Tonks ...I didn't mean to laugh at you," answered a now stone faced Harry as the earlier image of the young auror popped into his head and he had to do everything in his power not to let it cripple him again.

"It's alright Harry, you just startled me is all," she replied as she got up from the floor with a large smile on her still flushed and pretty heart-shaped face. "I was checking out your painting Harry, its really good, I didn't know that you even knew how to paint.

"Er ...thanks," admitted Harry shyly as he lowered his gaze to the floor to stop him from staring at Tonks and to fight the growing blush in his face and cheeks.

The skin tight tank-top was threatening to burst at the seams, as Tonks' chest easily filled out the top, drawing attention to the black lettering that read 'bad ass' right across the part of the shirt that most men's eyes would naturally travel to. Every time Harry would try to spare a glance up at the young auror, he would get caught up staring at her great figure and sexy outfit, and would then have to lower his blushing red face to the floor to correct the blood flow that Tonks' outfit was reeking havoc on.

"Do you like what you see Harry?" asked Tonks playfully and seductively as she watched the teenager struggle continuously with his blush and wandering eyes, bringing a very satisfied smile onto her pretty face.

“U-Um ...er ...,” stuttered Harry dumbly as his blush increased to rival any Weasley’s, causing Tonks to start giggling at his embarrassed discomfort. “Mmhmm,” he eventually managed to mumble loud enough for the young auror to hear.

“Good answer,” replied a still giggly Tonks as she enjoyed watching the blushing teenager struggle to compose himself much to her amusement. “You look pretty good yourself Harry,” she added with a wickedly mischievous smirk and wink at the now wide-eyed and still blushing Harry Potter.

“Thanks,” he mumbled nervously, trying to avoid her gaze, still not quite able to deal with the attractive witch’s outfit, nor did he trust himself to say much more when his brain could only seem to think of the pretty woman before him.

“So ...are you planning on painting all the walls?” asked Tonks curiously after she had her fill of teasing the younger wizard, as she happily stared up at the completed painting above the fireplace of Harry’s parents and godfather, her cousin Sirius Black.

“Yeah ...I mean I want to, it’s a lot of fun to paint,” he replied with a happy smile as he slowly got over his embarrassment and nerves and could at least look at the sexy Tonks again without his brain shutting off.

“Do you think you could teach me to paint like that? I think it’s just brilliant,” asked Tonks hopefully as she looked to the teenage wizard with big pleading eyes that she batted playfully causing him to gulp nervously as his body felt flushed all over.

“Sure,” squeaked out Harry, “it’s not really difficult spell work, but it does take some patience and control to get it right.”

“Brilliant,” supplied Tonks happily. “How about after some breakfast?” she added excitedly as she pulled out her wand and got started cooking the eggs and bacon on Harry’s newly designed stovetop, and transfigured skillets.

After a very large breakfast where Harry thought that he could almost rival his best friend Ron's appetite as he continued piling more and more eggs onto his plate and into his mouth, they cleaned up the kitchen. Finding some empty wall space by the bookshelves and desk off to the side of the large and comfortable den, they cleared out the area to give them plenty of room to work and get started. Harry spent half-an-hour painting different symbols and objects on the wall, showing Tonks exactly how to paint a wide variety of things, as well as the different types of techniques he figured out last night. Tonks watched intently as Harry demonstrated the wand "brushstrokes" and spells required, and instantly took to it, lending itself to an enjoyable morning of painting and talking about Sirius, and stories they remembered.

"What is that Tonks?" asked Harry several hours later after Tonks really started to get the hang of things.

"Just something I recently had a dream about," she replied shyly for some weird reason as she took a step back to see the progress she was making on the first painting she had worked on alone.

"I like it," started Harry, "is that the Order's shield?"

"Kind of, well ...not really," began Tonks skeptically before turning to Harry and fixing him with a mischievous look. "It's kind of a surprise, so no more peeking until I'm done mister, you got that?" she scolded playfully as she pushed Harry out of the den and told him to get working on painting his bedroom.

Harry worked for a while, painting a border around the very top of his walls in his bedroom. Hundreds of snitches and brooms lined the ceiling border giving the room a very distinctive Quidditch feel or theme. When it was almost time for lunch, Harry knocked on the closed door separating his bedroom and den, to let Tonks know that he wanted out, and was hungry. He promised not to steal a peek of her painting, but pleadingly asked for some food to hold him over.

"It's okay Harry; I'm just finishing up now. Give me one more minute and you can come out and see it," answered Tonks loudly through the still closed door.

When Harry opened the door, he was greeted by a very happy and excited Tonks, who glistened slightly with sweat making her already tight outfit cling to her gorgeous figure like second skin, causing Harry's brain and blood to go into overdrive. He walked unsteadily into the room, completely transfixed on the sparkling violet eyes and glistening body of an incredibly sexy looking Tonks. After taking a second to control his thoughts and breathing, he walked towards the attractive auror who was standing near the door leading out of his apartment and into the rest of the Dursley household.

"Are you ready to see it Harry?" she asked excitedly as she bounced in place in nervous anticipation.

"You bet," responded Harry quickly and happily at seeing the excitement and enjoyment that Tonks was having, and watching the large smile plastered to her beautiful face didn't hurt.

Tonks whirled around to face the door, and with a wave of her wand, cancelled the concealment charm she put over her two identical paintings. Harry just stared in awe at the two identical shields painted on each side of the door, flanking it perfectly. They each stood over two meters tall and over a meter wide, and resembled an old Family Shield or Crest; just not one Harry would have ever thought he'd see.

The shields were glittering gold, with a single bright red and golden tipped phoenix with their wings spread wide. Their talons held a single wand that seemed an exact replica of his, and each phoenix was marked with a golden lightening bolt on their chests. There was a solid emerald green ribbon that bordered the top of both shields that matched the staring teenager's wide eyes as he studied the beautiful paintings before him.

"These are incredible Tonks," started Harry in shock, "so what are they if they're not Order shields?"

"Well ...they started as Order shields, or at least the Phoenix crest idea did, but then I thought I could personalize it for you and your new apartment," she replied somewhat shyly, not really convinced if Harry

truly liked it, “hence the lightening bolt, wand, and green eyes and ribbon.”

“I love it Tonks, thank you,” replied Harry happily as he looked at the phoenix’s eyes too see they too matched his own, causing a warm feeling spread throughout him.

Harry then did something he never would have expected having the nerve to do, having never really initiated them in the past. He walked up to Tonks and gave her a big hug while whispering another heartfelt thanks for the painting and all her help this summer. The hot breath in her ear sent a pleasurable jolt of electricity through her body and legs causing them to quiver and forcing her to hold on to Harry tightly. Slowly pulling out of the hug, Harry placed a quick peck of his lips on Tonks’ still slightly blushing cheek before turning back admiringly toward her crest paintings that framed his door perfectly.

“They’re absolutely brilliant Tonks,” repeated Harry in wonder before turning back to the pretty auror again, “now let’s go get some lunch ...I’m starved.”

After lunch, where Harry and Tonks talked about the still bare training room and different ways to set it up depending on what Harry wanted to use it for, they made their way to said room to get a better understanding of the size and layout. Tonks talked about the different materials she would have to bring by to really set it up as a magical training room, and instead decided to set up a temporary protection ward so Harry could go over the spells he knew and wanted to learn. In order to get an understanding of his knowledge level, Tonks ran him through every spell he knew from both Hogwarts and those newer ones from the Practical Defensive Magic set, even surprising the young auror with his ability to learn and perform the newer spells so quickly and easily.

In seemingly no time, the need for food once again surfaced, and Harry asked Tonks if she would stay if he promised to make something good for dinner with all the groceries she got him. Harry showered quickly first, so he could begin to prepare the special dinner he had in mind while Tonks took her turn getting ready. Harry ended up preparing something he had always wanted, and by the



time Tonks joined him dressed as she was all day, he was salivating as he added the final touches to his sauce.

“What are we having Harry?” asked Tonks excitedly as she sat at the small kitchen counter hungrily smelling the aromas that filled the air, “it smells wonderful.”

“It’s actually pretty basic, just herb chicken with a creamy mushroom sauce and potatoes,” replied Harry as he began serving two plates before bringing them to the coffee table and taking a seat with Tonks on the comfortable sofa.

The two enjoyed a wonderful meal, and Harry asked Tonks to tell him stories of her days in Hogwarts and growing up, since she probably already knew about his. Tonks apparently had a relatively normal muggle-type childhood, something her muggle-born father was quite proud of. She had even gone to primary school, and wasn’t taught about magic until a temper tantrum at the age of six got out of control causing accidental magic.

Since then, her mother had begun giving her lessons on various basics of magic, and it was in these lessons at the age of ten, that they discovered her metamorphmagus abilities. Her mother was both proud and scared for her only child, as she realized the rarity of her talent would make her very attractive to those who would want to use that power to their own ends. She immediately contacted Professor Dumbledore, and along with McGonagall, had lessons arranged for when she started at Hogwarts later that year, and also helped scan the globe for books and resources to better understand and learn about the very rare gift of metamorphmagi.

Harry absolutely loved listening to Tonks’ stories, and often found himself staring at her pretty face while they ate. He watched as her hair and eyes both cycle through a variety of colors at different points of her story and was fascinated to no end at her enjoyment in possibly having another metamorph to share with. When she started talking about her need to visit her mother and borrow the metamorph books to help him learn more, Harry started thinking about something he had wondered ever since meeting the cute young auror, but was always too afraid to ask.

“U ...Um ...Tonks, can I ask you something?” he spoke timidly, not wanting to upset or offend the pretty witch, but genuinely curious none the less.

“Sure Harry, what’s up?” she replied as she finished her last bite of the wonderful meal he had made ...for her.

“W-Would you show me sometime ...if it’s not too much trouble ...w-what you really look like?” he asked with genuine desire and concern, wanting to know more about the wonderful person that was Tonks.

“Why Harry?” she asked skeptically and with the customary self-doubt starting to creep in, wondering why anybody would want to know, let alone Harry who never asked her to change anything about herself.

“I’m sorry Tonks, I didn’t mean to upset you, I-I guess I ...I just wanted to ...see the r-real you. I’m so sorry, you don’t have to show me, I shouldn’t have asked,” he stumbled apologetically over his words, embarrassed and somewhat ashamed of his presumptuous actions.

“No Harry, I didn’t mean to attack you, you don’t have to apologize, you just caught me off guard,” replied Tonks sympathetically giving the younger wizard an apologetic smile. “To be honest, nobody has seen the real me in years, nor has anyone besides my parents ever asked to. Most people just want to see me change into someone they know or someone famous or with bigger breasts,” she continued exasperatedly as she stared hard into the mesmerizing and concerned fill green eyes staring back at her looking for his reaction.

“I’m sorry Tonks, I didn’t know,” he replied resignedly and sympathetically as his heart went out to the fun loving young witch, who had obviously been hurt by others in the past when it came to exploiting her rare talents.

“It’s not your fault, how could you have known. It’s not like I enjoy talking about all the assholes I’ve dated in the past,” huffed Tonks trying to lighten the mood somewhat. “Don’t worry Harry, if you really

want I will show you the real me, but tonight's the weekly Order meeting and I've got to get a move on, so maybe another time," she finished as she rose from her seat and stretched knowingly in front of the wide eyed and heart racing teenager.

"I'll see you tomorrow then," replied a slightly stuttering wizard. "Oh ...can you remember to ask Dumbledore about my idea concerning my scar?"

"No problem Harry," replied Tonks happily. "Dinner was amazing, maybe I'll let you make it again sometime," she finished with a slight chuckle as she stepped over and leaned down to give Harry a small hug and peck on the cheek, which was red by the time she pulled away.

"Any time," whispered Harry back and near enough to her ear to send another excited wave of pleasure down her body before they broke the hug.

"See you later Harry," waved Tonks as she disappeared through the door now marked on each side by the crests she designed and painted earlier that morning.

After quickly doing all the dishes, and realizing he now had the necessary time alone to really give Occlumency a try, and more importantly locating and then organizing this so-called 'brain library.' Using the same breathing and meditation exercises that let him examine his magical core, this time Harry's subconscious went looking for the all important first step to an organized mind. After what seemed like forever, but was probably only twenty minutes, Harry came upon a room that he knew instantly had to be the 'brain library' he was looking for, although it hardly looked like any library he had ever seen, and whoever was the librarian should have been fired ages ago.

The 'brain library' if you could even call it that now, was nothing more than a large empty floor, not even a room since there were no walls, and the floor was covered almost a meter high in random bits of paper ranging from loose scraps of parchment to long scrolls, and even some roughly thrown together journals. As he approached the

mess, he actually felt like he was entering a real place, and was soon seen as himself wading through the waist deep papers. Knowing that he would need to start somewhere, he thought about his need for a comfortable chair, and similarly to the Room of Requirement, a very cozy chair matching those in his apartment's den appeared before him, pushing paper, scrolls, and journals aside to make the necessary room.

Taking a seat in the very comfortable chair, Harry reached for one of the small topmost papers on the pile nearest his seat and began to read the recipe for that night's dinner which he had just finished. Thinking that he would need a small desk or work space and an organizational system for dealing with the sorted memories, the 'brain library' actually took on the shape of one, albeit with an utter mess of loose information scattered over the floor. He now had a small desk and bookshelf that sat next to him to help him get started with his organization project.

After going through several more of the loose papers on the top of the pile, his most recent experiences, memories, and actions were relived in seconds, most still fresh on his mind. He soon started digging deeper into the pile until he pulled out a rough and rudimentary looking bound journal that immediately threw him into one of his worst days in recent memory. He relived the final task of the Tri-Wizard Tournament and the rebirth of Lord Voldemort as an outsider to his own life in only a few short moments.

He emerged from the memory a short time later strained emotionally and seemingly sick as he sat on the chair in his 'brain library' now looking at an even sturdier bound journal in front of him. Harry continued the task at hand after pushing aside the larger book, now much wearier of what to expect when organizing his mind. He continued the long process of sorting through and reviewing old memories, details, spells, information, actions, scenes, encounters, thoughts, and dreams. Then compiling all of that knowledge into its proper temporary place, in this case the folders he started to make to keep this together.

To Harry, it felt like days of reliving almost all the memories of his entire life, and was astounded when suddenly he began to start

seeing the stone floor of his 'brain library' for the first time. He had already organized many folders, filling the small but continually growing shelves next to his desk. He had separated them into countless things such as; pre-Hogwarts, the individual Dursleys, the cupboard, childhood hopes and dreams, Primary School, Privet Drive, and then Hogwarts, classes, friends, enemies, dreams, accomplishments, nightmares, visions, the Prophecy. Everything now had a place albeit temporary, and the library was slowly starting to take shape before his eyes.

When he finished with the last of the loose memories that were scattered on the floor, he was beyond emotionally spent and felt as if he was on autopilot as he finished the last several. Now, he had several shelves full of everything sorted into temporary folders of much varying sizes, and he also felt a level of detachment that seemed to make viewing the memories easier and more objective. So he began going through folder after folder, reviewing like things together, and when finished, putting that information into much sturdier books and journals. He ended up compiling many running journals of spell knowledge in every subject, his friends and enemies, and countless other things, and for the first time felt a real sense of accomplishment and peace with what he was slowly hoping would become a well organized mind.

He looked around him at the shelves nearby and the expansive space around him, and slowly started to imagine a room, with walls and a ceiling forming around him. As soon as his first attempt at rudimentary walls were constructed, he felt a jolt of magic that instantly had him on high alert. From the outside of his new walls he could feel a threatening nature of magical energy trying to force its way through and penetrate his meager defenses protecting his now much more organized mind. Acting on pure protective instinct, Harry pushed with all of his willpower and magic to expel that force or presence from anywhere near his newly constructed 'brain library.' Almost at once the presence disappeared, but left behind a slight twinge of pain in his lightning bolt scar that he could feel even inside his own mind and answered the question of what the hell or at least who the hell that was before he fell back into the chair in his mind unconscious....

"I call this meeting of the Order of the Phoenix together," started Albus Dumbledore from the head of the very large crowd gathered around Grimmauld Place's kitchen table. "We have a lot to get to tonight, so if I could have your attention we will work quickly. Severus, I would like to hear what is going on with Voldemort and his followers?" continued Albus with a knowing and mischievous smile, despite the flinching members of the Order at even the mention of the Dark Lord's name.

"What do you know Albus?" asked Severus Snape questioningly, not liking that look, but knowing he would get nothing until he gave his report, carries on. "The Dark Lord was again injured twice this past week, early Thursday morning, and then much more severely on Monday night. I was called both times to administer several strength restoratives, and on Monday had to treat him for magical exhaustion, which he has never required. Several Death Eaters are worried since he hasn't left his room much since the night at the Ministry, and there have even been some grumblings from some of the newbie's. Without Lucius around keeping everyone on eggshells, Bellatrix has taken over all the new recruit training, and is a little more brutal and will probably sort the problem out in her own special way," finished Severus without any emotion after years of practicing masking his feelings with an occluded mind and blank expressionless face.

"Professor?" asked Tonks as she silently looked to the Headmaster, who merely nodded indicating her to tell of Harry's role and the pulsating incidents of the past week.

"Well," she began as she locked eyes with the greasy haired potion master, "Harry is responsible for both attacks, by accident on Thursday and very purposefully again on Monday."

"What?!" shouted several people including the greasy git.

"Harry found his magical core being suffocated by V-V ...You-Know-Who's, and he and his magic reacted and purged the stranglehold He had," replied Tonks to the mostly awestruck crowd of onlookers.

“How?” demanded Severus angrily, refusing to believe that Potter could have had anything to do with this, and looked immediately to Dumbledore for confirmation.

“Yes, Nymphadora is correct Severus,” started Albus with a growing sparkle gleaming in his crystal blue eyes. “As she witnessed both events while on guard at Privet Drive, of which I accompanied her on Monday, and can attest to her story. Apparently, Mr. Potter began meditating and discovered his magical core being suffocated by Voldemort’s as she described it, and then purged it from his body with his own core’s magic through force of will directly through the link he shares with the Dark Lord. Even the access magic of the battle was enough to cover the entire neighborhood with both a horrible and finally wonderful feeling. It exhausted our young Mr. Potter for most of the night and following morning, but nothing serious, am I correct Nymphadora?”

“Yes sir,” she grumbled unappreciatively at her name being used constantly, but quickly brightened as she thought back to the last few days of memories she shared with Harry. “Harry is doing much better, his mood has even improved a great deal, and he’s spent the last two days practicing magic almost non-stop, and boy can that kid do some serious magic.”

“Magic? How is he practicing magic? What about the Ministry?” asked a nervous looking Arthur Weasley from the seat next to his even more worried and highly overprotective wife Molly?

“Ah ...yes ...well, Thursday’s incident alerted the Ministry of Mr. Potter’s situation, and luckily, being the middle of the night, he and I were able to meet with Madam Bones and Mafalda Hopkirk without word getting to Cornelius, who then dropped any charges after Harry’s cooperation of that event and with the upcoming trials for the eleven Death Eaters. She also informed me of the destruction of both Harry’s magical signature detector, and the general magical sensors of Surrey after Thursday’s episode, which according to Nymphadora, was comparatively weak to the one we both experienced later on Monday,” added Albus importantly and with a growing sparkling.

“So once again, the famous Potter gets celebrity treatment,” spat Snape venomously and with a nasty sneer on his greasy and sallow face.

“Sod off Snivellus,” spat back an equally angry Tonks that startled almost everyone in the room who had never seen the happy spirited and positive auror look so deadly, except perhaps Kingsley and Moody, who both knew better than to say anything, but shared a knowing look with each other that went unseen by everyone at the table except a very quiet and extremely depressed werewolf.

“Don’t you dare call me that Nymph-” yelled Severus before being interrupted and unable to continue.

SMACK

Tonks had leapt out of her seat and slugged Severus right in his obnoxiously large nose in one quick motion before anyone knew what had happened. The Potion Master went flying backwards over his chair and was met with another CRACK, as his head slammed into the stone floor sending spots dancing in his eyes as he let out a pain filled grunt. The blood on his hands from holding his nose was a pretty good sign that she had broken it, and she gave him a satisfied smile as she politely sat back down as if nothing happened.

“Was that really necessary Nymphad-” started Dumbledore disapprovingly.

“Sir,” interrupted Tonks loudly and with a slight anger in her voice, “I have asked you all to call me Tonks, please respect those wishes.”

“Very well,” spoke Albus in resignation. “Moving on,” he continued capturing everyone’s attention, including the still slightly grumbling Severus who was eyeing Tonks hatefully across the table. “I would like to talk about the possibilities for new members, and then guard schedules.”

“New members?” asked Molly Weasley fearfully.



“Yes Molly,” replied Albus seriously, “both Fred and George have expressed an interest in joining the Order now that they are of age, and want to include their friend and employee Lee Jordan. I am still unsure if they are mature enough to handle the burdens of this responsibility, but that is why I would like to discuss these and other possibilities for new members. I have started speaking with Madam Bones, who I feel is partial to our cause, and would be a great asset to us. Are there any others to consider at the moment?”

“Yes, Fleur Delacour is now working with me at Gringotts; she would be a great addition too. Plus she has several foreign contacts,” piped in Bill Weasley with a slight smile on his handsome face as he thought about his part-veela girlfriend.

“I spoke with Greg MacMillan in the Office of Magical Transport. He seems like a good candidate, and has great connections to the Floo Network and Port-key Offices. I think Harry and Ron know his son Ernie,” spoke Arthur Weasley proudly, knowing how important people like Greg and Amelia would be to the group.

“Really?” asked Amos Diggory in surprise. “MacMillan is a good man; he’d be a great addition.”

“I agree,” spoke Dumbledore after a short pause where he studied the faces of those around him. “Perhaps we can extend invitations for them to join us soon, but for now ...Remus, what news do you have from the ‘Cubs Clan’?”

“Well, they don’t wish to join You-Know-Who, but they are not very keen on the Ministry and therefore wizard kind. Ferdinand said they hope to avoid the conflict altogether as they did during the first war, and that He wouldn’t come looking for them if they stayed out of it,” replied Remus sadly. “I tried to convince him otherwise, but he was quite adamant about his clan’s refusal to get involved in any way.”

“Well, that’s not entirely unexpected, do you have arrangements to meet with the ‘Hounds’ soon?” asked Albus questioningly.

“Yes I spoke with Linus on Friday, and we’re planning a large meeting with Pierre in Algiers this week,” replied the tired and worn down looking werewolf.

“Very good, let’s move on to guard schedules...” started Albus, as the meeting continued from there for a good while until they finally finished. “Until next week then.”

As everyone got up and made to leave the dreary kitchen of Number Twelve Grimmauld Place, Tonks approached Dumbledore to ask the question her and Harry had talked about during training today. Waiting for a quick hushed conversation between Albus and Severus to end, Tonks gave Remus a large smile and told him that Harry was doing much better, and that she needed to run an errand and wouldn’t be able to hang out and talk. When the Potions Master left, with an angry scowl at the waiting auror who just smirked back in response, she was able to ask Dumbledore Harry’s question.

“Sir, Harry wanted to ask if it was alright that he tried a few things to finish the purge of You-Know-Who, or at least try to set up a block by his scar. He wanted to know if he could get some potions in advance in case it wears him out again,” spoke Tonks quickly and very business like.

“Of course,” replied Dumbledore. “Why don’t you accompany me back to Hogwarts and we’ll have Madam Pomfrey put something together for you to bring back.”

“Thank you sir,” replied Tonks happily, knowing that it would be a great help to the young wizard she had really started to get to know this past week.

After a quick Floo trip straight back to the Headmaster’s Office, the two were walking towards the infirmary both thinking about the very same green eyed young wizard. Madam Pomfrey was all too happy to help giving Tonks several restorative draughts, pain-relief potions and energy elixirs that would greatly come in handy in the coming weeks. It wasn’t until they were both back in the Headmaster’s Office that Tonks noticed and was enraptured with a brightly glowing silver glass globe sitting in prominence on the old man’s desk.

"I see you find the magical globe tied to Privet Drive to be as fascinating as I do," spoke Dumbledore warmly as he stared reminiscently at the glowing globe between them.

"What do you mean sir, I thought you said they were all destroyed?" asked Tonks genuinely curious and concerned for her new young friend.

"Only the Ministry's cheaply made globes were destroyed, this globe actually represents the magic at Privet Drive, and up until last Thursday was pretty much blank and rarely glowed. Since the first pulsating incident however, it has glowed constantly, first a dark grey, then slowly moving towards light silver almost as if Harry himself is bleeding off excess magic," replied Dumbledore with a strong twinkle returning to his eyes, brightening his old and worn face.

"Is that dangerous sir?" asked a wide eyed Tonks as she thought about what that would mean to Harry.

"Not to worry, it's not dangerous at all, especially now that most of Voldemort's magic has been purged from him," started Dumbledore, "...here look at this globe," he continued as he pulled another glass globe, this one glowing a brilliant red with gold tendrils running through it. "This represents Fawkes' life force or magic if you will. As a purely magical creature, even when she is sleeping as she is now, she still exudes magic, much like I believe Mr. Potter is doing at this very moment."

"But couldn't it be all the wards, charms, and transfigurations we did to the house. Wouldn't they give off a residual magic of sorts?" asked Tonks in slight shock at what the Headmaster was saying.

"Ah, yes they would ...however," continued Dumbledore with a happy smile as he pulled another glass globe out of his desk drawer that seemed to be completely off except for the very faintest twinges of red light deep in its center almost unnoticeable, "this globe is for the Burrow. With everything magical going on there, this is about as strong as it ever gets unless Bill is working on the wards specifically, and is how Harry's globe always was before Thursday."

“So Harry is ...what? Pure magic or something like a phoenix?” asked a slightly nervous and startled Tonks, who was even more worried for the young wizard that was quickly becoming a true friend.

“I really don’t know,” sighed Dumbledore, looking every bit his one hundred and sixty-two years, but still with a small twinkle in his crystal blue eyes. “The fact that the globe has changed colors at all is remarkable. The silver has only gotten brighter, while this little golden hue seems to have slowly started showing.”

“Yeah, you can see a little gold in th-,” she replied before jumping at the sight of the globe, pulsating a brilliant gold right in front of her eyes.

“That’s the first time it’s flashed gold,” spoke Dumbledore inquisitively as he stared at the small glass globe still in the young auror’s hand.

“I’m going to go check on him sir,” interrupted Tonks quickly as she gathered the prepared stock of potions and was at the fireplace in only a moment.

“I’m sure everything will be fine my dear,” started Dumbledore calmly. “Report back when everything is settled,” he added before she disappeared into the flash of green flames and he added a silent prayer, “I hope you’re alright my boy.”

Tonks apparated straight into Harry’s new apartment the second she came out through Mrs. Figg’s floo, to discover Harry out cold, with sweat still on his pale face and the palpable feeling of magic radiating or almost exuding off his body. It was a similar feeling she had felt for the past few days, and she had just come to associate the feeling with being around Harry, but now that she knew that it was basically excess raw magical energy sweating off his body; she wondered how she hadn’t noticed it for what it was before now. She looked down on the peaceful face of the seemingly sleeping wizard she had really grown to care for and not for the first time, she had to convince herself that nothing could happen with the underage Boy-Who-Lived. Therefore she had to ignore her first instinct to just straddle him and start snogging him until he awoke, and instead reached out a

comforting hand and gently squeezed and shook his shoulder to wake him.

“Harry ...its Tonks, are you alright?” she asked after the slight shaking seemed to work, causing Harry to slowly open his eyes.

“Yeah,” he breathed out heavily and still very sleepy looking, “what time is it?”

“Past midnight now, I came straight from getting you some supplies at Hogwarts after the Order meeting ended,” replied Tonks quickly as she performed a basic field magical scan of Harry to make sure his basic vitals were okay as he slowly followed her with half-closed and glazed over green eyes as he fought to stay awake. “Dumbledore was showing me your magical sensor and explaining things about it which I’ll tell you tomorrow when you’re more awake. Anyway, the globe pulsated just once, so I came to check on you ...I was so worried.”

“Thank you Dora,” responded Harry barely conscious as his eyes fell closed and he drifted to sleep, completely oblivious to the wide eyed and excited Tonks, whose smile lit up as she watched the younger wizard sleeping comfortably and with a small smile on his own tired looking face.

Harry woke up the following morning long before dawn, still on the sofa, but covered with another blanket that he didn’t remember getting himself. He vaguely remembered Tonks waking him up and checking on him last night after he had passed out from overexerting himself during his Occlumency defense, and figured that she left the blanket for him. Not wanting to leave the comfortable warmth of the sofa and blanket, Harry decided to go back to organizing his mind and strengthening his defenses after being so rudely interrupted the night before by Voldemort’s interference, and also wanting to see what kind of damage was done.

Entering his ‘brain library’ this time was much easier as he just pictured himself sitting in the comfortable chair of said library, and was somewhat astonished as he found himself there in seemingly no time. He was also instantly amazed at everything he was able to get

organized the previous night before passing out and that it was just as he left it, and was excited to get started again today. The 'brain library' actually looked more like a small cozy study, with no doors or windows, and only a desk, chair, and several bookshelves lining the walls, acting as the room's only furniture. Throughout those shelves, Harry recognized the basic rudimentary books of knowledge he had begun the night before, all lining the stone walls separated into various categories that only made sense to the boy in the library's only chair.

Looking around at the almost circular room, Harry thought back to the intrusion on his mind last night, and began thinking about other and better ways to protect his mind. He still had one more idea on solving the problem with the linked scar to Voldemort, but for now concentrated on just strengthening the walls of his 'brain library' from both the inside and out. Realizing that any Legilimens attacker would probably be outside these walls when trying to enter his mind, he slowly began setting up an elaborate system of defenses and traps that would hopefully slow down any intruder and alert him of their presence, giving him crucial time to muster up a strong defense. After feeling at least somewhat secure that he would at least be alerted if Voldemort attacked through his scar, or another Legilimens attacked discretely, Harry decided to finish reading on the subject before he got too far ahead of himself.

Getting off the sofa reluctantly, Harry went to his desk and grabbed the Auror Training Manual and brought it back to his spot. He re-read the beginning to get a firmer grasp of everything before moving on to the set up of the 'brain library' and then just beginning on its defense until it was time for his morning workout. Going through his bedroom to get to the training room, he caught a slight movement out of the corner of his eye that instantly put him on alert. That is until he saw the lump on his bed and heard a low grumbling that could only be Tonks, making him smile as he continued into the training room for another morning workout.

Over two hours later, after running laps, lifting weights, and various other stretches and exercises, an exhausted and shirtless Harry turned around to head for the shower. There, silhouetted in the door stood an amused Tonks that stared hungrily at the shirtless and

sweaty body of the underage wizard as he approached. Harry, in a rare move of boldness, tried to turn the tables on the pretty auror from yesterday's teasing.

"Do you like what you see Tonks?" smirked Harry with a suggestive wink, totally catching the already struggling young witch off-guard.

"U-Um ...er ..." she stuttered embarrassedly before lowering her gaze to the floor and with a final mutter whispered, "Mmmhmm."

The smile that lit up Harry's face, first from Tonks' checking him out and her embarrassment at getting caught, but also her mumbled response went unseen by the still embarrassed and slightly blushing auror. She didn't look up again until Harry was right in front of her, and when she did she had to hold in her breath at being this close to him all sweaty and gorgeous. She took a long moment to checking out his thin and wiry frame, pausing here and there in her inspection for obvious reasons before having the courage to look him in his intense green eyes alive with joy.

"I need a shower, but then how about breakfast?" he asked normally, without the earlier playful tone, having a good idea what was coming next after the hardening of her eyes during her inspection of his body.

"Okay Harry," she started slowly and deliberately as she stared hard into Harry's eyes, "but then you and I are going to have a long chat about all those scars, you got that MISTER!"

Harry simply nodded and headed off for a long and deliberately slow shower, dreading talking about his various scars or the memories they invoked, even to someone as nice as Tonks. Sitting on the sofa in front of a large plate of eggs, potatoes, and bacon, Harry took a long glance at the pink haired auror next to him, and found nothing but concern and compassion in her sparkling green eyes that now almost perfectly matched his own. The dread he was feeling just moments ago slowly started to ebb away as he searched the eyes that mirrored his own for a long minute before speaking.

“So ...which scars did you want to know about?” asked Harry slightly hesitantly, but with a reassuring smile on his face so as not to upset the friendly auror who was only trying to help him this summer.

“How many are there?” asked Tonks questioningly before she lowered her head ashamedly for being so rude. “...No wait ...you don’t have to answer that Harry ...I’m sorry ...whatever you’re comfortable telling me is fine.”

“Don’t be sorry Tonks, it’s alright,” answered Harry comfortingly as he smile slightly at the pretty auror. “Anyway, besides the lightening bolt, I’ve got four, well maybe five.”

“Five?” asked Tonks wide eyed and slightly scared at what she would discover about the younger wizard.

“Yeah, two on my back, one at each elbow,” he added as he showed each elbow quickly. “Then this one on my hand,” he finished as he showed the handiwork of Umbridge’s Blood Quill.

“Who made you use a Blood Quill?” asked Tonks dangerously as she saw the words cut into the back of his hand enough to leave a permanent scar.

“Umbridge, who else,” replied Harry flatly as he tried not to get to upset at the thought, and wanting to answer Tonks honestly.

“That bitch!” shrieked Tonks, obviously not working with the same level of restraint as the younger wizard, “ooh ...She’ll pay for this.”

“Tonks, it’s alright. She’s gone now, it doesn’t matter,” replied Harry trying to calm the angry auror.

“Doesn’t matter ...Harry, blood quills are illegal and have been for years. They are only used rarely in ancestry and inheritance cases, and are heavily regulated by the Ministry,” replied the still angry auror as she stared disbelievingly at the younger wizard.

“Oh ...I didn’t know,” replied Harry ashamed of his ignorance as he lowered his head to avoid the concern filled eyes staring hard at him.



"I'm sorry Harry, I forget that you haven't grown up knowing wizard law and customs," responded the pretty auror as she grabbed his hand and pulled it into her lap so she could get a better look at the long rough scar that ran almost ten centimeters from the inside of his elbow down to his forearm. "Would you tell me about this scar Harry?" she continued as she gently traced it with her finger eliciting a shudder from the teenage wizard.

"Blood of the enemy ...forcibly taken," started Harry in almost a trance like detached state. "Wormtail cut it with a ritual knife in the graveyard to resurrect Voldemort's body."

"Oh Harry, I'm so sorry," cried Tonks suddenly as she buried her head into his chest and began crying softly as Harry simply did the only thing he could, he wrapped his arms around her and hugged her protectively while letting it out of her system.

"Shhh Tonks, it's alright, I'm alright," whispered Harry comfortingly in her ear as she just clung to him and continued sobbing.

"A-And ...w-what about t-the ...other elbow?" she choked out several minutes later as she stared up at Harry with watery eyes and stained tear tracks down her flushed cheeks.

"We don't have to do this now Tonks," responded Harry warmly as he looked at her tear stained face, and not wanting to cause her anymore grief or pain over past events.

"No Harry, p-please t-tell me ...I-I want to know," she replied shakily as her eyes seemed to betray her desire to know more, making Harry realize just how difficult this was for the friendly auror.

"I got that scar from the Basilisk in the Chamber of Secrets during my second year," answered Harry honestly as he hugged the lithe body of Tonks closer to his chest, enjoying her warmth and the comforting feeling she gave him which allowed him to talk about the bad memories of his past.

"A B-B-Basilisk?" squeaked Tonks in a combination of fear and amazement.

"Have you not heard about the Chamber of Secrets? I figured that Dumbledore would have at least told the Order about that," he responded openly.

"No, Dumbledore never said anything about it. I mean ...there were rumors about the Chamber of Secrets a few years ago, but they always seemed a bit far-fetched. I did a good bit of exploring in my Hogwarts days, and I never found any secret chamber," she responded back.

"You did a lot of exploring, what for?" asked Harry confusedly, "and how long ago were you at Hogwarts?"

"Everyone spends some time exploring Hogwarts," responded Tonks with a smile starting to grace her lips. "And I only left in 1991, you're first year."

"Really? How did I not see you?" he asked quickly and curiously.

"Why, did you have a habit of checking out the Ravenclaw seventh years?" asked Tonks teasingly, glad to be on a lighter topic of conversation, even though she was the one who originally brought it up.

"No," whispered Harry as he embarrassedly lowered his head to hide from Tonks' highly amused gaze.

"I'm just messing with you Harry," giggled Tonks as she smiled at Harry, making his heart beat loudly and forgetting his earlier embarrassment. "So ...could you tell me about the Chamber of Secrets sometime?" she continued after a short silence, knowing she was destroying the good mood the two had finally achieved.

"Sure Tonks," started Harry. "If you want, you could perform Legilimancy, and I could try to direct you towards the memory. I've just started organizing my mind, and I'd love to have someone see my mental defenses and 'brain library' to see if I'm doing things right."

"Are you sure Harry, we don't have to," answered Tonks somewhat fearfully at what she might end up seeing, and not wanting to put Harry through the memory again.

"I don't mind showing you," replied Harry honestly, and with a little apprehension at what might happen, or what the pretty auror would think of him afterwards. "I have been going over the memories myself, so I really don't mind."

"Okay Harry, if you're sure," added Tonks warmly as she stared into the burning intense eyes of the younger wizard and gave him a weak smile. "Are you ready?"

After receiving a nod from Harry, Tonks raised her wand as they locked eyes before she spoke the incantation clearly. Entering Harry's mind, she was immediately disoriented, like someone had thrown her upside down and backwards, and everything was obscured by a very thick almost silvery white fog. Panicking for a split second and not knowing what was happening, she thought about leaving before anything bad happened, when all of a sudden she was righted as she felt someone grab a hold of her hand. In an instant the world righted itself, the fog lifted and she was left staring at a large cylindrical shaped stone wall in front of her while a smiling image of Harry Potter now held her hand comfortingly.

"I guess the disorientation spell worked?" spoke Harry with a slight snigger as he waited for Tonks to fully regain her bearings.

"That's what that was?" asked Tonks hysterically as she looked around her uncertainty.

"Yep, and this," he said pointing to the cylindrical shaped stone building, "is my 'brain library'. Come on in," he finished as he projected the two of them straight into the cozy study-like 'brain library' never releasing the pretty auror's hand.

Going straight to the shelf that had the rudimentary texts of his experiences with Voldemort and pulling it out, he headed back to the chair in the den which grew slightly to accommodate them both. After

they were seated comfortably, Harry, still clinging to Tonks' hand, brought them into the memory of his second year starting in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom on the second floor. They followed Professor Lockhart and the two twelve year old wizards down into the chamber, and Tonks was appalled at hearing Lockhart's confession and seeing the Basilisk skin decaying on the ground a little ways in.

Tonks was amazed at the determination of the twelve year old version of the wizard next to her, and absolutely terrified that he continued alone deeper into the legendary Chamber of Secrets. She was disgusted by the sickening feelings she got when entering the inner chamber, and had no clue how the twelve year old memory Harry was able to continue. She gasped as the memory Harry approached the unconscious Ginny Weasley, and was amazed watching the sixteen year old version of Tom Marvolo Riddle announce that he was Lord Voldemort and Salazar Slytherin's last remaining Heir.

She was immensely proud of the twelve year old Harry's defiance in the face of obvious danger, but that was nothing compared to the amazement of watching him fight and defeat the enormous ancient Basilisk. She was gently crying as Harry removed the Basilisk fang from his arm, amazingly still alive, and stab and destroy the diary, killing the memory of the Dark Lord and reviving and saving the eleven year old Ginny. As Fawkes saved Harry's life with his healing tears, Tonks was crying loudly and clutching the hand in hers tightly for comfort and support. When the scene ended, Harry and Tonks were back inside Harry's 'brain library', where Tonks' representation tackled Harry back into the chair, hugging and clinging to him tightly, utterly overwhelmed by what she had seen and witnessed this young wizard accomplish.

"Oh Merlin, Harry," cried Tonks into his chest, "I-I-I ...had no idea ...I-I'm so s-sorry I made you relive that."

"Shhh, it's alright Tonks," whispered Harry comfortingly as he continued to hug her close to him, "come on, let's get out of here."

Once back in his apartment, Tonks immediately flung herself at Harry, who barely had enough time to open his arms and welcome the red-

eyed and sobbing young witch as she crashed into his chest. He hugged her tightly, relishing in the warm feeling her closeness brought to him, and the wonderful smell of her hair and body. He continued rubbing small circles on her back as her cries slowly lessened, and whispered reassuring words of comfort that seemed to help even more.

“Thank you Harry,” whispered Tonks after several minutes of relishing in the protective embrace of the younger wizard she could no longer fool herself into thinking that she didn’t like.

“It’s no problem Tonks,” replied Harry who could hug the cute auror all day if she’d let him.

“Do I ...do I even want to know about the other two scars on your back?” she asked slightly teary eyed and fearful that it would lead to even more surprises that she wouldn’t be capable of handling.

“The one on my shoulder was from the Hungarian Horntail during the first task of the Tri-Wizard Tournament,” started Harry nonchalantly, “and ...the other is from Uncle Vernon’s belt when I broke a teacup at the age of nine.”

“Oh Harry ...I’m so sorry,” she replied with a growing anger in her eyes that pushed the sadness away, giving her a very determined look, that caused Harry to gulp audibly.

“It’s alright Tonks. It was a long time ago,” added Harry to help calm the young auror’s anger before deciding to switch topics altogether. “So ...do you want to do some more painting, or should we start training earlier?”

“Can we paint please, that is just so much fun,” she replied with a happy smile growing on her still slightly tear stained face.

“Sure Tonks,” laughed Harry slightly amused at the happy smile lighting up her red and puffy, but still pretty heart-shaped face.

For the next two hours, Tonks worked on painting a beautiful and calming outdoor scene of a large stone fountain in a small wooded

clearing that was infested with pixies, doxies, fairies, and other small magical woodland creatures on the bathroom wall. Meanwhile, Harry was trying a new approach to painting, and used the time to organize his mind and continue reviewing old memories to better learn and understand them. While subconsciously in his mind, Harry's body continued to paint almost of its own accord, a subconscious scene made from his memories on the wall in his bedroom.

Harry painted an intensely realistic portrayal of Prongs, Moony, and Padfoot in their true Marauder forms without knowledge of what his body was doing. Harry's memory of his own Patronus acted as the model of his father's animagus form of Prongs, who stood proudly on the large wall, flanked on each side by the werewolf Moony, and the large grim-like dog animagus of his godfather. He remained inside his mind, while his body continued to finish the finer details of the painting.

Oblivious to what was going on around him, Harry kept working until a gasp from behind him broke him out of his internal organization of his mind and back to reality. Staring back at a now finished painting in front of him, Harry had to hold back his own gasp at the realism and detail of his father's and godfather's animagus forms, as well as Lupin's lycanthropic form. His eyes misted slightly when looking at his mind's creation, until Tonks' clearing of her throat reminded him that he wasn't alone at the moment.

"Sorry Tonks," started Harry quietly as he turned to the auror with watery eyes, burning with emotion and loss, "d-d-did you n-need s-something?"

"Oh Harry," started Tonks sympathetically as she flung herself at the younger wizard who gratefully welcomed her into his arms, "it's so beautiful ...Sirius would be so proud."

"Thanks Tonks," whispered Harry softly as he tightened his grip on the attractive woman in his arms, and held on tightly for several long minutes trying to compose himself from the very emotionally draining experience of painting memories.

“Are you ready for lunch Harry?” she asked after several more minutes of comforting one another in the friendly embrace.

“Sure, let’s eat,” he replied as he led Tonks into the kitchen by her hand which he grabbed in his greedily.

After a relatively quiet lunch, Tonks showed Harry the large painting she started in the bathroom, that he absolutely loved before they headed into the training room for another day of spell work. The bare walls of the training room had already lost yesterday’s temporary protection charms, so before they could begin training; they had some more permanent work to do. Tonks pulled out of her backpack and removed six solid rectangular stones, and a vile of a bright orange almost neon colored potion. She carefully dropped three drops on each stone, explaining the strengthening properties of this particular potion before setting the first brick by the wall next to the lone door of the large training room.

Tonks instructed Harry how to enlarge the single bricked stone to fit the bare wall, while permanently affixing it to the once bare plaster wall. A half-an-hour later, and Harry and Tonks stood in the completed stone walled training room, with many more levels of spell protection on the walls, floor, and ceiling than they started with. They had charms to prevent damage to the surfaces, reduce sound, and provide cushioning to prevent injury.

They then spent the next four hours practicing all the newer spells Harry had begun learning this summer, until he felt confident that he could use them in a duel, or perform them on command. Tonks was absolutely stunned at the ease with which Harry picked up and learned these more difficult spells that took most people, including herself, days and even weeks to learn to become as proficient in them as he was after only a few short hours. As they were finally leaving the training room both dripping in sweat and breathing heavily from exhaustion, they passed through Harry’s bedroom, and Tonks was reminded of the question she had wanted to ask Harry after seeing his painting.

“Harry, where did you get that picture of Sirius as a dog, or the werewolf I assume is Remus, and ...who is the stag?”

"My memories I guess. I've seen Sirius as a dog enough, but have only see Remus as the werewolf once during my third year. And the stag ...he was my dad, I modeled that one after my Patronus which Remus told me looks just like him," replied Harry as his eyes glazed over slightly as a small wave of sadness quickly washed over him until he looked up into Tonks' sympathetic and understanding face that brought a small smile to his own.

"Could you show me your Patronus?" she asked shyly, but with a warm comforting smile on her pretty face.

"Sure Tonks," he replied before smiling largely at the excitement his answer gave to the pretty auror.

Harry didn't even need to conjure up a happy memory as he stared at the very beautiful and happy face of Tonks, filling him with the warmth he always associated with the feelings required for the advanced charm. After clearly speaking the incantation, Prongs leapt out of Harry's wand gallantly, looking around for any threat of Dementors. Finding none, Prongs turned his silvery head and fully corporeal body towards Harry and Tonks, appraisingly looking at the two humans before giving a short bow and disappearing in a puff of silvery smoke.

"That was awesome!" exclaimed a wide-eyed Tonks as she looked back to Harry and then the spot just vacated by Prongs the Patronus, and then back to Harry again, still in absolute awe.

"Um ...thanks," mumbled a now slightly embarrassed Harry at the praise, not thinking it was really that impressive.

"Really Harry! That was incredible, Dumbledore's Phoenix Patronus isn't even that solid or seemingly intelligent, it looked at us ...it knew you," she replied even more excited than before as she realized she just witnessed something truly amazing.

"Oh," sighed Harry somewhat dejectedly at having yet another thing about him that was abnormal.



“Well don’t get too excited Harry,” spoke Tonks sarcastically as she mock glared at the young wizard who seemed to shy away from even well deserved praise like most people ran from Death Eaters.

“Sorry,” replied Harry with a heavy sigh, “sometimes I just hate being so different, you know?”

“Do I?” asked a smart-ass Tonks as she quickly cycled through several very different appearances before settling back to her customary style of late, spiky pink hair and either violet or silver eyes depending on the day.

“Ha ...yeah, I guess you do,” he replied with a slight snort at Tonks’ antics, but a comfortable smile on his face as he realized the truth in their many similarities.

“Why don’t you shower first, Harry,” started Tonks after a short silence between the two new friends with a happy smile on her pretty heart shaped face, “...then you can make me dinner again.”

“Sure Tonks,” he responded with an equally large smile before quickly grabbing a change of clothes and hurrying off to the bathroom.

Dinner that night was a relatively calm and pleasant affair, where the two friends shared a tremendous meal of spaghetti and meat sauce that Tonks absolutely loved. Conversation was relatively general, about their experiences in Hogwarts, certain classes and teachers and spells, and mainly stories of Tonks’ childhood growing up in an effort to keep it light. By the time Tonks left, Harry felt they knew each other almost as well as his other friends, despite the short amount of time, and was amazed at how open, honest, and easy Tonks was to chat to or hang out with. Thinking about his other friends however, made him want to see them as well, not that he wanted to talk about everything with them, but just to sit around and hang out like normal teenagers.

“Ha,” snorted Harry out loud at his thoughts, “...like I’ll ever be normal.”

Making his way from the now clean kitchen to his den's sofa, he picked back up the Auror Training Manual: Occlumency/Legilimancy, and got comfortable with the incredibly helpful book. As midnight approached, he had actually managed to finish reading the first half of the large tome dealing with the art of Occlumency, and was quite amazed at his discoveries. Not only did a well ordered and occluded mind learn faster and retain better, but it also lessened one's need for sleep considerably, which was very appealing to the young wizard who had suffered with nightmares and visions for the last several years.

Harry then spent the next two hours inside his 'brain library' reliving old memories in order to remove their emotional attachments and solidify the growing library of knowledge in which they were contained. He continued separating and categorizing his knowledge, experiences, and memories while integrating more of the suggestions to improving his occluded mind that he had just read more about and began assimilating. He worked on his 'brain library' for what seemed much longer than the allotted time, and not until he actually felt his body and magic tire did he realize that he had been pushing himself both physically and magically for over twenty hours straight, and was planning on keeping it that way and therefore needed a really good sleep.

AN: It is official ...I hate typing, but LOVE this story. I am almost finished writing chapter 13, and it's looking to be around 18 chapters total ...I think/hope. Thanks for all the reviews, many have been very helpful, and I welcome all, but won't ever require them. If you like this story great, if not, there are over 300K more to choose from, you won't hurt my feelings.

I can't start posting my HarryBellatrix stories until this one is further along. It's too hard for my brain to jump back and forth, too much happens to keep track of. But I promise to work harder to get them both out soon, I love Hellatrix!

## Chapter 6

Harry awoke before dawn on Friday morning (July 7th), fully rested and refreshed despite only being asleep for a mere three hours. Merlin he loved Occlumency, he didn't even manage to have a single nightmare or vision. He threw on a pair of shorts and made his way to the training room, where he stretched, jogged laps around the walls, did sprints and other shuttle races, all getting his heart beating heavily at the intensity that his cardio workouts had already grown to. He then lifted weights, focusing today on his back and triceps for the upper body, and his hamstrings and groin for the lower half.

Harry was physically exhausted as he dragged himself to the shower, while his exhaustion slowly ebbed away while under the scalding hot water. Despite the long shower, he still emerged into the den a half-an-hour earlier than normal because of his growing familiarity with his morning workout. Knowing that he had a little time, he moved to the sofa and began meditating; wanting to check on his mental defenses and the scar connection he shared with Voldemort.

Harry had been truly amazed when reading about Occlumency shields that had proven effective for various others, but mostly learned that the more personalized and unique to the individual, the better they would function. Therefore, it was still the original rudimentary stone walls and 'booby-trap' defenses that he now strengthened considerably and examined for weaknesses. Time inside his head passed quickly and easily, so when he was interrupted by Tonks at about 7:30am, it felt more like three hours instead of the thirty minutes it truly was. Harry had a warm smile for the pretty auror, who today dressed in very tight and sexy muggle blue jeans and a small black tank-top, and happily returned the teenager's smile.

"Wotcher Harry," spoke Tonks after they had met eyes, green and silver today, and shared their smiles with one another.

"Hi Tonks," responded Harry happily, "I like the hair, are you going for a new look?"

"Oh ...yeah, I thought I'd try blue today ...do you really like it?" she answered and then asked all in the same breath, and somewhat shyly as she studied Harry's face for the real answer.

"Of course I like it," he replied honestly, as a lopsided grin slowly spread across his face. "You look great regardless of your hair color."

"Thanks Harry," she replied shyly and slightly blushing until she could get it under control.

"Are you hungry?" asked Harry as he got off the sofa and started towards the kitchen area, "I was just waiting on you for breakfast."

"Yeah ...thanks," breathed out Tonks happily, for both the subject change and the offer of enjoying his wonderful breakfasts.

Breakfast was a light scene, and the two talked of other physical exercises like the Tai Chi book she had given him, which he had yet to read. They also talked about karate, boxing, and sword fighting which were all great possibilities if he had someone who could train him in any of those disciplines. Tonks talked about her very limited knowledge of basic self-defense style karate that Kingsley taught all the new aurors, and even mentioned asking her friend and auror partner if he would come over to at least show Harry a few things and get him started. From there they moved on to the plan for today, which greatly excited the young green eyed wizard who was eager to learn all that he could.

"Instead of you painting today," started Tonks gleefully as her silver eyes sparkled knowingly, "I brought some thing for you to read before we start training."

"What do you want me to read?" asked Harry skeptically, Tonks was far too happy to be talking about anything normal.

"This," she replied, who took out of her pocket a small rectangular package that looked like a box of matches before tapping it with her wand and watching it enlarge gleefully.

Harry watched in a more resigned anticipation at what would make Tonks this happy, especially over a book. She almost reminded him of Hermione's crazy obsession with books, until he took in what it was before him that had his companion so excited. An old and relatively thick dark brown leather bound tome with a single word on the cover flashing or cycling through every color of the rainbow sat on the table, and brought an equally large smile on the face of the green eyed wizard, 'METAMORPH'.

"Wow, this is brilliant," spoke Harry in awe as his fingers lightly traced the rainbow colored words on the cover.

"This book is really old and very rare," started Tonks with a bright smile on her still heart shaped face, "but it's also by far the best."

"Thanks Tonks," started Harry still slightly stunned at the large tome that sat before him, and almost as eager as the young witch next to him to get started on something that could prove to be beyond helpful.

"We shouldn't start training until you've read this whole book. You really will need a good base theory understanding of metamorphmagus, as well as a greater knowledge of the human body before you start messing around with changing your appearance," spoke Tonks importantly and still excitedly at the prospect of getting to train another metamorph, especially one as nice and hot as Harry Potter.

"Oh! All right," he answered grabbing the book eagerly and returning to the sofa, before turning back to the smiling auror, "what are you going to do?"

"Finish my painting in the bathroom of course," she replied with a smile and a wink before she disappeared into said room while Harry got himself comfortable for a long read.

The book Metamorph, was truly fantastic, and gave a large and easy to understand introduction to the various skills and traits of a metamorph, how they were usually discovered, and tests to learn or take to determine one's ability level and capabilities. All metamorphs are not the same, and in fact, there are three levels they usually fit

within. The first level being protein based changes like hair and fingernails, then muscular or body tissue changes, and finally skeletal structural changes. The book continued explaining internal human chemistry or the muggle science of the body. It explained skeletal and muscular structures, organs and skin, as well as the fundamental components that make up everything, the cellular structure.

Harry was simply amazed at the detail and images provided to help better explain the complexities of the human anatomy and biology, and remembered just a tiny bit from his primary school days but on a much more basic level. By the time he reached the end of the book about training, strengthening, and maintaining these changes over periods of time and duress, Harry was eager to begin learning more about what he might be capable of. He was a little nervous however, that he might only be a protein metamorph; because his hair has been the only sign he knew that he might be a metamorph. He quickly began organizing this information directly into his 'mind library', strengthening his own understanding of the subject, and clearing his mind in the process, a habit that he was starting to make second nature after everything he was trying to learn and accomplish.

"Harry? Are you sleeping?" asked Tonks with a slightly accusing and also disappointed voice, as she stood in front of the younger wizard on the sofa with his eyes closed and the book tossed aside.

"What? No Tonks ...I was just organizing my thoughts ...and clearing my mind," he replied startled and somewhat confused at her accusation.

"Oh ...well, did you at least read the introduction and about the different types or levels of metamorph magic?" she asked hopefully, but with a hint of sadness that Harry wasn't as eager to learn about being a metamorphmagus.

"Huh?" started Harry as he stared disbelievingly at the pretty auror, "of course I read the introduction ...I read the whole book ...and it was kind of at the beginning," he finished sarcastically, not knowing what was bothering his friend.

“WHAT?! That book is like five hundred pages!” exclaimed Tonks incredibly as she stared wide-eyed the cheekily grinning teenager.

“So, it was interesting,” he answered nonchalantly, not thinking it was that big of a deal since it did take him over three hours, “plus I really wanted to learn about it.”

“Brilliant,” she replied happily, “let’s get some lunch and then we can start practicing the fun stuff...”

“Okay, remember what the book said. You’re concentrating on how you want the hair to look,” continued Tonks soothingly. “Now you have to push your magic into that change at the physical level, not the mental. Or in this case your hair and not your mind.”

It had been over an hour, and Harry still hadn’t managed to do a single thing other than strain and sweat as he tried repeatedly to push his magic into his hair, while focusing on the change and expected results in his mind’s eye. His frustration was starting to grow, making it harder for him to focus and achieve the goals he and Tonks were working towards, longer hair. After a very strong pulse of magic crashed out of Harry as he pushed for the change again, he let out a groan and hung his head somewhat ashamedly, figuring that he probably wasn’t in fact a metamorph, but just some freak who was forever doomed or maybe cursed with ‘Potter head’.

“Harry, you’re trying too hard,” started Tonks patiently as she watched the resigned body language of the younger green eyed wizard before taking a step towards him and grabbing both of his hands in hers. “Don’t get too frustrated Harry, I believe you will get it. It might just take some time.”

“Thanks Tonks,” breathed out Harry letting some of his frustration fall only to be replaced by a little nervousness at the closeness and contact he was sharing with the pretty auror, and causing him to blush slightly as their eyes met.

“No problem Harry,” she replied honestly and suddenly equally nervous at the close contact, causing her hair and eyes to begin cycling through the various colors of the rainbow instinctively.

The feeling was quite indescribable for Harry, as he held her hands and a small tingle of her magic could be felt as her hair shifted from color to color. Harry concentrated on that feeling until he felt his own magic slowly match the tingle he felt from Tonks as they continued to lock eyes. A gasp and widened eyes from his pretty teacher caused his concentration to falter as the tingling sensation slowly faded leaving slight warmth in its wake as it seemingly only receded from the surface, but never truly disappeared.

“You did it Harry!” exclaimed Tonks excitedly and without letting go of his hands as she grew her hair out to shoulder length silver and Harry’s copied moments later.

She wanted to run her hands through his longer hair now so badly, but didn’t want to release the hold she had on his hands. Harry just shook out his lengthier mane, enjoying the feeling as it flopped around his face causing a few giggles from Tonks and Harry to bring his focus back to the face of the pretty auror.

“I can’t thank you enough Tonks ...you have been so great to me ...you have no idea how much that means to me,” he spoke softly as he took in Tonks’ sparkling silver eyes and full lips which she took that moment to bite nervously sending his teenage hormones racing excitedly as he fought the urge to kiss the gorgeous woman.

“I’m more than happy to help Harry,” she responded kindly as she too fought against her desire to snog the adorable wizard before her.

Neither realized how long they stood like that, holding hands and staring at one another, maybe seconds or even minutes, but neither made any intention to move. It wasn’t until Tonks’ hair again started cycling through colors matched by Harry’s that the two reluctantly let go of each others hands, severing the connection and causing the tingling sensation to dissipate to almost nothing.

“Now you’ve got to try by yourself,” stated Tonks importantly as she sat down to watch his progress and collect her own racing thoughts.



Harry was determined to get that tingling feeling back and make Tonks proud of him, and after several minutes he could feel it slowly starting to build again. When the tingling felt like it had before, Harry started picturing different hairstyles and colors as he focused the tingling to his hair. His success was rewarded by a very happy and strong hug from his teacher, whose excitement was only matched by his own.

They then spent the next few hours building up and strengthening Harry's ability to make and hold the other protein based metamorph changes while still doing other things. Tonks had him performing spells and dueling while maintaining his changes, and explained how with practice it becomes easier to call up the magic, and make and keep changes. By dinnertime, Harry was able to control and maintain his protein changes during an entire twenty minute duel; something Tonks was very quick to congratulate him on. An exhausted Harry dragged himself into a quick shower just before seven, more tired than any day previously.

They ate dinner peacefully, as Harry was still tired and sore, but had an enjoyable meal. Harry absolutely loved spending time with Tonks, even for a quiet meal was great, and was somewhat disappointed when their meal ended and he knew his friend was getting ready to leave for the day. She didn't leave until telling Harry to take it easy tonight so that he would have energy to continue working on his metamorph training tomorrow, something that proved quite draining today. She also gave him another hug and reminded him how proud she was that he was a metamorph like her before leaving for the night.

Harry decided to take Tonks' advice and went to his desk to find one of his new books to sit down and read for a while. Remembering his earlier discussion with Tonks, Harry started with the book she had brought him earlier, Tai Chi. Tai Chi, as it is practiced today, can perhaps best be thought of as a moving form of yoga and meditation combined. There are a number of so- called forms (sometimes also called 'sets') which consist of a sequence of movements. Many of these movements are originally derived from the martial arts (and perhaps even more ancestrally than that, from the natural movements of animals and birds) although the way they are performed in Tai Chi

is slowly, softly and gracefully with smooth and even transitions between them.

Harry greatly enjoyed reading about another eastern discipline that contained many of the same elements of meditation and breathing he learned in the book from Remus and his Dad. The physical element it introduced was even more appealing to the younger wizard trying to get into better shape, in each his body, mind, and magic (or spirit as the Tai Chi book referred to it). He marked the section with all the diagrams and forms to use tomorrow morning during his workouts before returning to his desk to get another book.

Knowing he had Hermione's books for the whole summer, and not wanting to start something completely new, he went for Neville's relatively normal sized books on Herbology, still not ready for Luna's mother's book on Unspeakables. He went back to the sofa and started with Understanding Basic Herbology, a short introduction that turned out to not be too useful since he had already spent years tending the Dursley's garden at Privet Drive and studying basic Herbology, and magical gardening wasn't too different, just the plants. Its greatest benefit was to show the wide variety of applications for Herbology and most things the magical plant kingdom has to offer the world and its people. It took no time to move on to the next, So You Want to Start a Greenhouse, a detailed account of everything needed to have your own flourishing greenhouse of any kind. If you wanted to make money or a living, the book explained what plants sold best, were in the most demand, were easiest to handle, or most useful in potions and apothecaries. Harry found this one fascinating, that with a small but well planned greenhouse, you could grow most of your own basic ingredients used for basic potions and home remedies, as well as fruits and vegetables for food.

The last of Neville's books, was also the largest, Herbology: Cultivating Potions Ingredients, and according to Harry, the most fascinating. It detailed step by step instructions on how to grow a seemingly infinite number of plants that were used in potions, from the most common to the rarest of the rare. Neville's Mimulus Mimbletonia was listed as a level three, ultra rare plant, one of only a handful that are controlled by the Ministry's Agriculture Department. Most helpful for Harry however was the in depth explanations on

preparing herbology ingredients used in potions, and why they are used or cultivated in a certain way. He knew instantly how much help this would be if he was to get into Snape's NEWT Potions Class, and wondered why Neville, who obviously knew all of this stuff, still had so many problems in the class. 'Oh yeah ...the greasy git,' he snorted to himself as he was reminded why no non-Slytherin's liked or did well in Potions Classes with Severus Snape.

It was half past one that night when Harry finished the last of Neville's Herbology books, and he decided to go lay in bed and organize his thoughts and assimilate the new information of the day into his mind library before he could fall asleep. He awoke well before dawn on Saturday morning very well rested, and stayed in bed for twenty minutes reinforcing his Occlumency shields and making sure nothing needed to be dealt with in his mind library. He found the book containing his memory of the night at the Department of Mysteries had come out of its shelf and sat open on the large wooden desk inside his comfortable mind. Remembering vaguely about dreaming last night of Sirius and the veil must be a by product of him not fully dealing with every aspect of the memory. Probably the same things that prevented him from reading Unspeakables last night, and caused him on some level of his mind to bring it out to be dealt with, kept him from dealing with it now, and he instead put it off for later, and returned to reality.

Harry was excited when he began his running, and hurried slightly through it in order to spend extra time getting started with his new Tai Chi exercises. The diagrams in the muggle book didn't do justice to the fluidity and exactness of the movements, but none the less, he enjoyed the calming effect the breathing, meditating, and movements had on him, and before he knew it he was starting to tire as his hour was up, and he headed to the shower much more relaxed, but no less tired than most mornings. After getting dressed he went to the kitchen and began preparing breakfast omelets with ham, cheese, and a few vegetables, waiting for Tonks to show up any minute.

"Wotcher Harry," spoke Tonks happily as she took in the wonderful aroma of breakfast and wandered over to the kitchen.

"Morning Tonks," he replied cheerfully as he continued moving around the kitchen without missing a step.

"Breakfast smells great!" she exclaimed hungrily as she tried to steal a glance at the stove top, and after meeting Harry's eyes, gave him a large smile.

"I'm just about done," he added excitedly, greatly enjoying the company every morning and all day for that matter with his newest and at the moment closest friend.

"Hey Harry," started Tonks later after they both settled into their food, "you should try to practice holding changes throughout the day, it will only help you get better acquainted with everything."

"Okay," he replied before screwing up his eyes in concentration for a few seconds before his hair started to grow past his shoulders and turned silvery white like Dumbledore's, causing Tonks to start laughing hysterically.

"You might want to tie that hair back while you eat," she replied between giggles as she watched the hair fall forward every time Harry leaned forward to eat his breakfast. "After breakfast, we'll finish up with the other protein based changes, and then try to move on to the muscular changes."

Using their method of success from the day before, or just because she wanted to, Tonks began this lesson by taking both of Harry's hands in hers and let him feel what it felt like for her to go through first the finger and toe nails, and then the eyes, eyebrows, and body hair. It took relatively little time for Harry to replicate everything Tonks did, but struggled sometimes when changing his eye color, and he guessed that part of the problem was that he just didn't really want to. His eyes, just like his mothers, were one of the few things he truly liked about himself, but knew that they were too recognizable, so change them he did.

"That's wonderful Harry," exclaimed Tonks excitedly as she stared at his ever changing eyes. "I bet you didn't even realize that you're still holding onto the long silver hair too."

“Oh ...you’re right, I didn’t,” he answered back in surprise.

“I like the all silver look on you ...plus, it makes you look much older too,” she replied honestly, thinking that he looked good however his hair or eyes were, but not ready to say something that forward.

“Thanks,” mumbled Harry blushing.

“Okay, now onto muscular changes,” she started happily.

“Remember the anatomy of your body and the individual muscles and muscular groups. Focus on making them grow, and remember to take into account stretching your skin to accommodate any large changes ...here, pay attention to how this feels,” she continued as she slowly and deliberately started pumping up her muscles with her magic beyond what she considered normal for a girl’s frame so that Harry would understand the feelings better.

By the time lunch rolled around, Harry was capable of making large scale muscular changes throughout his body, and he and Tonks couldn’t be happier. Throughout lunch she chatted happily about how incredible it was to have another metamorph, and how much she enjoyed training and eating with Harry. She was very eager to discover if Harry would also have the same luck with skeletal changes, and couldn’t wait to see how it went. So after lunch, the two returned to the training room, and were once again facing one another with there hands held in each others, practicing the skeletal structural changes. After all the other work he had been doing with metamorphing, this one proved the easiest to pick up, and he was soon standing a very large 6’6” tall with enormous muscles on his large and intimidating frame.

“Um ...Tonks, if I can change my height at will, then why haven’t I grown much in the last few years?” he asked confusedly “I mean ...don’t you think I would have accidentally done something by now to get taller?”

“I don’t know Harry, maybe your body wasn’t ready for it yet ...or maybe subconsciously you didn’t want to change your height just like

your eyes,” she responded insightfully as she thought seriously about his question.

“Yeah probably, I never really wanted to stand out,” he responded thoughtfully before flashing a large smile at Tonks, who merely shook her head in exasperation at his answer never understanding what he had to be so shy about.

Tonks decided to start testing Harry’s ability to concentrate and multi-task by maintaining the skeletal, muscular, and protein based changes throughout a light duel. Within the first few minutes he learned why Tonks was so clumsy sometimes, since it was very difficult and different to move around with differing heights, weights, and centers of gravity, and Harry soon found himself falling all over himself often. His added bulk, which he originally thought would be a strength of his, in fact made maneuvering and dodging very difficult and was the cause for defeat more often than not.

The next several hours saw a slow and steady improvement in Harry’s ability to multi-task and hold the various metamorph changes while dueling admirably. Tonks was truly amazed at Harry’s unheard of progress in making and maintaining metamorph changes, but chalked it off to him being older and in better control of his mind and magic than she was when she learned. She was quick to encourage him, and not let him get frustrated when he lost a duel due to his constantly changing body sizes. She told him how the changes would only get easier the more you practiced them, and almost become second nature after a while. He promised to continue practicing throughout his days, and even at night until the changes became easier for him to control and manage.

“Now, I know we haven’t talked about this, but are you going to tell anyone about being a metamorph?” asked Tonks skeptically as they had finally sat down to a large dinner that night.

“I hadn’t really thought about it,” started Harry slowly while thinking it over, “I don’t really want to.”

“Good, because I don’t think you should,” she replied quickly while giving Harry a small comforting smile. “People will treat you differently

if they know, plus this way you have the element of surprise. We could probably even sneak out of here sometimes and travel around pretty inconspicuously once the changes becomes second nature.”

“Do you mean it,” asked a wide silver eyed teenager, “we could really sneak out of here? I mean, you’d let me?”

“Of course Harry,” she replied as if that was the most obvious thing in the world. “As nice as this apartment now is, it’s still nice to get out once in a while.”

“Yeah it is,” he agreed resignedly as his thoughts drifted to his Godfather and his times in prison, both Azkaban and Grimmauld Place, as his eyes sought out the large portrait of him with his parents above the mantel.

“It’s okay to miss him Harry,” spoke Tonks comfortingly as she followed his gaze, “he was a great man.”

“Yeah, he sure was,” he breathed out slowly as he reminiscently thought back to the few great times he had with the man who he considered a second father and a small smile graced his lips as he continued to gaze up at by far his favorite painting, ignoring the nagging in his mind that he needed to deal with his memories of that night.

“I bet they’re all really proud of you,” started Tonks softly after a long pause to give the younger wizard some time, “I know I am.”

“Thanks Tonks, that really means a lot,” he replied as he gave a great smile to the pretty auror who had made his life so much better in such a short time.

“Don’t mention it Harry,” she responded happily, returning the smile and gazing into his still silver eyes, watching them brighten to match his mood. “Hey when Bill’s here tomorrow you should try to keep up as many subtle changes you think you can get away with or that he won’t notice. Maybe give yourself a just a little more height, weight, and hair, and change the shade of your hair and eyes just enough to not look too different.”

"That's a great idea," started Harry excitedly as he screwed up his eyes in concentration and slowly changed back to a slightly larger version of himself, taking into account every word Tonks said and applying it immediately. "Last time we just sat around, talked and played chess. I'm sure I could hold them all during that."

"Perfect," replied Tonks happily, both with the plan and his success already at demonstrating his subtle changes he would employ when others were around. "Well, it getting pretty late, and I think I better head home. I'll see you on Monday okay, and take care of yourself while I'm gone."

"Thanks Tonks, I'll see you Monday ...for breakfast," he replied cheekily as she was preparing to disapparate, causing her to stop as she had quickly lost focus and gave Harry a mock glare, but then a pretty smile before she waved goodbye and disappeared.

Making his way to his desk after cleaning the dishes, Harry decided to prepare for his visit tomorrow with Bill, and grabbed the least opened textbook he owned, History of Magic. Having finished reviewing all of his own meager book collection, and Tonks' and Neville's contributions last night, he settled for the one book he had rarely ever opened let alone read. It's not like History as Professor Binns taught it, or didn't depending on your viewpoint was anything of interest to the average student. Knowing now though about Sirius' upcoming Will Reading at Gringotts, and Harry had wished he had paid a little more attention when in class being lectured on Goblin History and Rebellions, Professor Binns' favorite topics of discussion.

Harry spent the entire night pouring over his very long and dry History of Magic texts of the last five years, and when he finally realized that he needed sleep, it was fast approaching 2AM. He tried to continue the techniques of organizing his thoughts and clearing his mind, but was too sleepy to do it well, and had completely forgotten about the book of memories from the night Sirius died that had fallen out the night before. He hastily tried to put everything away as his eyelids were falling heavily, and he knew he would be in for a restless night for not successfully completing the process, but was too tired to deal with those memories now, a mistake he would not soon duplicate.



Like he feared, Harry had one of his worst nights in weeks, and like the very beginning of his summer, the nightmares were filled with nothing but his failure at saving Sirius and the guilt and loss he now felt in its wake. He woke in a sweat, wrapped tightly in his twisted sheets, and despite not sleeping well, it was already after dawn when he was finally able to get out of bed and start his day. Sundays were his day off of weight lifting and Bill wasn't expected until almost lunch time, so he took his time with his morning stretching and run around the training room.

After he was warmed up and breathing strong, he decided to step up his Tai Chi practices a bit now that he better understood the discipline and forms. He transfigured weighted straps for his wrists and ankles before beginning the long series of forms he had enjoyed so much yesterday, figuring he could combine some of his weight training into his other exercises. When he finished today, he was absolutely whipped out and sweating profusely, and after a long hot shower, he stood in front of the bathroom mirror making subtle metamorph changes that wouldn't tip off Bill and still allow him to practice for Tonks. He ended up adding three centimeters in height and a few kilos of weight, while growing out his fingernails and tinting his hair and eyes just enough to suit his purposes before fixing a late breakfast in the den.

Harry used the rest of the morning to finish reviewing his History of Magic texts, and when he finished had a great respect and new appreciation for the Goblin Nation. It dealt almost primarily with Goblin-Wizard relations, and Harry was pleased to discover that the Goblin Rebellion of 1724 split forever the two sides. The Goblin Nation was autonomous and independent of the Ministry and therefore was governed by their very own code of law. Harry was quite eager to ask Bill about it when he arrived, since he worked at Gringotts with the Goblins themselves.

He didn't have to wait long, as at exactly eleven, Bill Weasley was knocking on the front door and seconds later let into

Harry's apartment by a scowling faced Aunt Petunia who Harry completely ignored. Bill was blown away at the size of the main den

and its functionality, and even more blown away by the art that decorated the walls, which Harry was more than happy to talk about. He gave Bill a tour of the entire apartment explaining about Tonks' paintings and the Marauders, who Bill had heard many stories about during his Hogwarts days.

The best part of the tour for Bill however was the training room which he marveled at for several minutes as he wandered around. He soon began a complicated series of wand movements which made the walls glow an orangish-red for a split second before returning to normal. After another series of even more elaborate wand movements, three small different colored bubbles appeared at the tip of his wand before they disappeared in a puff of multi-colored smoke.

"What was that?" asked Harry curiously, having never seen either spell the older curse breaker had just performed.

"Oh sorry ...um, the first was a sort of a diagnostic spell to see the levels of magic you have protecting the walls and that have absorbed into the walls," started Bill shaky at first, but more relaxed once he got into explaining it. "The second spell is used to determine what wards are currently protecting the property. Each of those bubbles represented a different ward and its current strength. The blue is your standard anti-apparition, anti-scrying, anti-portkey ward that you have to key into before you can apparate, portkey, or scry anywhere on the premises. The red one was the blood wards that Dumbledore designed on your mother's sacrifice; I haven't really seen anything quite like it. The last silver one is a favorite of Dumbledore's, it protects those inside from harmful magical intent."

"Except for the blood wards, the other two both need to be strengthened almost annually, but I've found a way around that. Three years ago, my excavation team was brought to a small underground village outside of Cairo. We discovered several in tact wards that had been somehow tied to the ambient magic in the area, and therefore had strengthened to such a point that the area was almost impenetrable. It took us four months to finally break the Runic Codes they used, and we figured out how they accomplished their task. To make a long story short, I can now basically tie the magic absorbed into the walls directly into the wards, strengthening them

continually,” finished Bill with the largest smile Harry had ever seen on his face as he reminisced and told his tale.

“Wow,” was all Harry could say after the quick explanation on warding that almost went completely over his head, but which still interested him to no end. “Could you show me how to do it?”

“I can show you, have you taken any Ancient Runes?” asked Bill.

“Um ...no, not yet,” replied Harry dejectedly.

“Don’t worry about it Harry. I’ll bring some more books with me next week to help you get started, but for now I’ll just talk you through it as I go,” he responded happily giving the younger wizard a comfortable smile.

Harry watched over the next forty minutes as Bill drew elaborate Runes on each of the four walls, the floor, and ceiling before bringing them all together in a complicated Runic pattern that floated in front of him, which he then tied to the wards. The entire process was breathtaking and somewhat overwhelming to have never studied Runes or Wards, but Harry listened intently as Bill explained his way through every step. He was fascinated by Bill’s stories and descriptions, and couldn’t wait to read up on the subjects. They continued the discussion through a late lunch, and then decided on a game of chess where they could talk about the goblins and Gringotts.

“Now you have to promise to take good care of this,” started Bill after the chess game had begun and he pulled out a shrunken book from his robes which he quickly enlarged and handed to the younger wizard. “Understanding Goblin Law was written by the Head of the Goblin Nation, and only one copy is issued to every wizard employee upon entering into the Goblin’s service, so please take good care of it.”

“Thanks Bill,” he replied in awe, “I promise to be careful with it.”

“I know you will Harry,” replied the older red-headed wizard warmly to the eager young man he was fast considering as his own little brother.

In an absolute stroke of luck, Harry won the first game of chess decidedly, his first ever win. They ended up playing two more games, both won by Bill, as the older Weasley talked all about getting his job at Gringotts, his training, and time in Egypt, and what he was doing now, curse breaking and vault security for the main bank. He also mentioned to Harry that Fleur Delacour, the Beauxbaton Tri-Wizard Champion had just recently started working in the foreign accounts department at Gringotts, and that the two had already gone out on a few dates, something that Harry happily congratulated the older wizard on.

It was almost five o'clock when Bill got up to say goodbye, and Harry couldn't believe where the time went. He had again greatly enjoyed Bill's visit, and thought about the whole Weasley family, which he almost considered to be his own. How great it would be to have brothers like Bill, Charlie, the twins, and Ron, or Ginny as his sister along with Hermione. He could even throw Neville and Luna into that group that he now considered his 'family.' Even Tonks was like family, although a part of him he had yet to acknowledge saw her as something much greater than a sister.

His happy thoughts about his new 'family' members however, led him right back to his Godfather, and the loss and pain he felt. He made a quick sandwich before settling on the sofa to prepare for the daunting task that he knew lay ahead of him. He did not want a repeat of last night's nightmares, and knew that he would have to really deal with the unpleasant memories from the night at the Department of Mysteries if he ever wanted to sleep peacefully or master Occlumency. Gathering up his Gryffindor courage, Harry charged ahead before he could dwell on it any longer and entered his meditative state and quickly found himself inside his 'mind library,' where several things covered the desk and the poorly bound book of memories of that fateful night.

It seemed to take no time at all to organize all his other thoughts and memories, leaving him staring at the loosely bound book of that night which caused so much of his misery these past few weeks. 'No time like the present,' he thought sarcastically as he jumped right into the worst night of his short and horror filled night. It wasn't until the seventh time through that Harry was able to finally remove some of

the emotions connected to those memories making them easier to understand from an unbiased perspective. He began noticing more and more that went on around him, and started picking up several incantations and wand movements used by Death Eaters for spells he had yet to learn, until now. The most fascinating of these were the spells Riddle and Dumbledore themselves used when dueling in the atrium, far beyond anything he was presently capable of, but he studied both men's movements and magic extensively, dissecting every aspect of the entire night.

Despite his own fears, he also spent a long time watching and analyzing Sirius' duel with Bellatrix, and had come to several unusual conclusions. The first, and most painful, was that his godfather was indeed dead and not coming back. While he hadn't yet read Luna's mother's Journal, he knew it in his heart to be true. A small part of him knew that he was gone, and after accepting that fact was able to begin dealing with that loss. He also realized that Bellatrix had never cast anything harmful towards her cousin, and had in fact hit him with a simple stunner. After also watching her previous duel against Tonks, he found she had again used nothing harmful and left her niece stunned and relatively unhurt after defeating her. Harry was totally confused, had she suddenly become nice ...not likely. Maybe she held back because they were family ...possibly, but that didn't cause her to hold back against him later in the Atrium although to be fair he had used the unforgivable pain curse on her first despite it not being up to par. He really couldn't understand her actions, and found himself wondering intently what had caused it, but resigned himself to the fact he would probably never know.

He also spent time dealing with the guilt of casting his first and hopefully last unforgivable curse on another human being, even though it was cast improperly, the fact that he chose to use that curse was more disturbing than anything else he encountered during the long memory bar Sirius' death. He was utterly disgusted with himself for casting especially that curse on anyone, even a Death Eater. Nobody deserved that kind of pain; at least the killing curse is quick, almost mercifully so compared to the pain of the cruciatus. He did think that he would ever be able to forgive himself for what he had done, and the term unforgivable curse took on a whole new added meaning as he watched the scene over again. Could he ever forgive

himself, could he ever forgive Tom or Bellatrix for putting him under it, could Neville ever forgive the LeStrange family for what they did to his parents? No, probably not...

Moving to less depressing topics, Harry began analyzing his friend's fighting styles after he was able to remove his fear and worry over their safety by remembering they all survived and didn't hate or blame him. He was pleased to see them using a lot of the hexes, jinxes, and shields they had used in the DA, which because the Death Eaters didn't seem to be firing off unforgivable curses left and right, the shields often worked enough to at least deflect or weaken the curses. He was very happy how they tried to stay together, even if only in small groups, and was proud of the courage they showed in the face of such danger. He realized however, that they were fighting against a force much more knowledgeable and powerful when it came to magic, and that to fight this war, he and his friends would need to be much better prepared, cause their luck could not last forever, and Harry was under no delusion, that luck was indeed what saved them that night.

It was already after ten o'clock when Harry emerged from a much more organized and clear mind, and after quickly strengthening his Occlumency defenses he set out to make a large sandwich with crisps. After his snack, he sat down on the sofa and began to read Understanding Goblin Law until it was time for bed. The book was incredibly long and informative about Goblin culture and customs, and present day relations with wizard kind and other magical species. Harry almost made it to the large books half-way point before clearing his mind of the new information and turning in for an actually peaceful night.

Harry awoke Monday, the next morning very well rested, but also very physically sore from all the activity and training he was beginning to put his still thin body through. He decided to down one of the muscle relaxing potions Tonks left with him before heading to the training room to start another very filled day. After stretching a little extra and running several laps and sprints, he decided to forgo the basic weight lifting and instead dedicated more time to the new Tai Chi exercises which seemed to work more parts of his body than he thought possible, especially judging by the added soreness in places

previously unheard of. By seven am, an utterly exhausted Harry literally dragged himself into a steaming hot shower that helped calm his aching muscles and joints wonderfully.

“Wotcher Harry,” spoke Tonks from the sofa in the den as the young wizard emerged dressed from his bedroom, and ready for another day of training fun.

“Hi Tonks,” he replied happily as his smile widened at the sight of the pretty auror who he was coming to call a real friend. “What’s the plan for today?”

“Practice,” she responded with a mischievous gleam in her eyes and a small smirk on her face as she dropped a muggle magazine on the table in front of her.

“Practice what?” he asked confusedly as he began cooking a large breakfast of eggs, potatoes, and toast for both he and Tonks.

“You’ll see,” Tonks began teasingly as she gave Harry a flirtatious wink which made the teenage wizard blush slightly as his heart sped up excitedly at the looks he couldn’t believe he was getting from the attractive older auror.

When Harry brought breakfast over to Tonks, and took a seat next to her, he got a look at the cover of the magazine she had brought causing his voice to hitch and his face flame red in embarrassment. He stared openly at ‘Harrods Catalog – Men’s Underwear Issue’ in speechless shock until Tonks’ giggles broke him slightly out of his stupor. Looking over at the spiky pink haired violet eyed metamorphmagus didn’t improve his blush or panic as she stared hungrily back at him with a very sexy smile on her beautiful heart shaped face.

“U-um ...Tonks? What exactly are we practicing?” he stuttered out nervously, looking back and forth between the practically naked man on the magazine’s cover and the hungry look he was getting from his cute friend.

“You will be practicing full body changes,” she started slowly but very happily. “It will really help to have real images in your mind to avoid mistakes when transforming. I’ll just be here to check on your progress,” she finished with a seductive voice and wink which brought a new wave of blush to the teenage wizard’s face.

“U ...U-U ...Um,” stuttered Harry beyond nervous.

“Are you embarrassed that I’ll see you in your underwear Harry?” she asked honestly, but with an obvious hint of amusement in her sparkling eyes, enjoying the reaction she was getting.

“U ...Uh ...no, I-I ...don’t really wear any,” he stuttered and then rushed through embarrassedly, lowering his head in further embarrassment and missing the look of shock that crossed his friend’s face for only a second.

“Oh?!” she started in shock before an even sexier smile came to her lips as she gazed at the younger wizard longingly. “Do you always go commando?”

“Uh ...yeah,” he breathed out slowly and still embarrassedly, having never talked about this with anyone, and not really wanting to bring it up to someone he found so attractive.

“Really? How sexy,” purred Tonks seductively, leaning over to rub shoulders with the younger teenage wizard as she still stared greedily at him.

“I don’t do it to be sexy,” Harry replied sheepishly, “I do it out of necessity.”

“What do you mean?” asked Tonks, now quite curious as to his what his reasons would be.

“Dudley’s old clothes are bad enough...” spoke Harry with a disgusted look on his face before looking down at the overly large outfit of his cousin he was forced to wear and fought to keep his own anger and embarrassment in check.



"Don't you have any clothes of your own?" asked a shocked and rapidly angering Tonks at the treatment he was given by his 'family'.

"Only what I got for Hogwarts," he replied embarrassedly. "The Dursley's would never let me have my own things."

"Those bastards," spat Tonks venomously, and instantly angrier than Harry had ever seen the usually happy go lucky metamorph. "How could Dumbledore leave you with these people?"

"Simple," replied Harry resignedly, "blood wards."

"Ugh ...I'm going to give that old man a piece of my mind at the next meeting," she replied protectively before focusing on the shy and embarrassed wizard in front of her causing her anger to quickly dissipate at the hurt look in his eyes and to change her plan for the day. "Okay, here's what we'll do ...I'll transfigure you a pair of underwear, and you practice this with me until ten o'clock, and then I'll take you to go shopping for some new clothes ...deal?"

"Deal!" he exclaimed excitedly, both at the prospect of getting out of the house and getting clothes that might actually fit him.

A quick detour to his room with a new pair of transfigured men's briefs, Harry returned to the den totally embarrassed in only the new underwear only to see Tonks' wide eyed and hungry look. Ignoring his own growing blush and unease at the intensity of her eyes ogling his almost naked body, Harry grabbed the magazine out of her stunned hands happy to see that his scrawny and scarred body at least didn't repulse her to fleeing, and gathered his courage to begin.

"Do you like what you see Tonks?" he asked much braver than he felt as he tried to turn the tables on the pretty auror, as he gave her a flirtatious wink and grin.

"Uh ...um ...yeah," mumbled Tonks barely comprehensible, knowing the moment he walked in the room that she was screwed as she tried to fight every urge in her body not to ravish the unsuspecting teenager, who despite his lankiness, was quite fit looking, owing probably to the absolute lack of any body fat. "Maybe this wasn't such

a good idea,” spoke Tonks throatily as she continued to stare and lick her lips in anticipation of what she was planning to do.

“Why isn’t th-” started Harry confusedly before his mouth was cut off from further questions as it was crashed into the soft yet forceful lips of the older auror as she flung herself into his body aggressively.

For several seconds, Harry was completely confused as to what exactly was happening. For the tiniest of moments he thought he was being attacked, as Tonks’ hands immediately started rubbing and grabbing his chest, arms, and back greedily before he understood what was happening and was able to do something about it. The fifteen year old wizard needed no more prodding than that to react, and as fast as possible had his hands wrapping around the lithe body of Tonks, pulling her tightly into him. At the same time, his mouth too woke up and began responding the only way he could figure, reciprocate as he felt her tongue seek entrance into his mouth, which he happily obliged.

One of Harry’s hands crept up to the back of Tonks’ neck and found its way into her short spiky hair receiving a muffled moan of pleasure from the older woman as his other arm wrapped tightly around her waist keeping her close. Tonks increased her actions the moment Harry responded, and brought both of her hands up into Harry’s messy raven black hair as they continued to snog each other senseless. It was minutes later, when the kissing ended, leaving both metamorphs breathing heavily and staring glossy eyed back at one another with almost identical expressions of joy.

“Wow,” breathed Harry still in a slight daze, but staring none the less at the attractive woman still in his arms.

“Yeah,” replied Tonks in the same breathless voice, before the true reality of what she just did settled in, scaring her to death. “Oh sweet Merlin, I’m so sorry Harry, I shouldn’t have done th-“

She was interrupted this time as Harry returned her earlier action and captured her lips in his; not wanting to find out if Tonks thought it was a mistake. He poured all his feelings for the wonderful metamorph into a kiss that lasted even longer than the first, and which she

instantly returned, ignoring any of her earlier concerns or doubts. This time when the kiss broke, Harry noticed that she no longer had her customary short pink hair, and it was now jet black and fell in waves just past her shoulders. Her eyes also, were now a beautifully clear crystal blue, and sparkled with warmth and passion. Her once heart shaped face now held a more angular and thinner visage, instantly reminding Harry that Tonks was indeed a Black. His breath caught slightly in his throat as he took in all of Tonks' appearance and realized that he was now looking at the real Nymphadora Tonks.

"Y-You're beautiful," he whispered quietly as he stared warmly at the clear blue eyes of the attractive metamorph, making her smile if possible, grow even wider.

"Thank you Harry," she whispered back shyly and much less sure of herself than normal, as there were few people who knew what the metamorph really looked like.

Harry leaned in and placed another gentle kiss on the soft full lips of Tonks as he gave her a tight squeeze. He had never in his life felt as alive and happy as he had then, and knew that it had everything to do with the woman in his arms. Tonks also, had absolutely melted into the kiss and his arms, having never felt so safe and secure in her short twenty-two years of life. It was several minutes later that the two finally ended the kiss, but did not release the other from their arms.

"Harry," breathed Tonks still huskily, "I think we should take a break. Besides, we need to train if you want to go shopping today."

"Oh ...okay Tonks," he replied somewhat dejectedly, not wanting to stop or knowing if he had done something wrong or upset her.

"Harry, you didn't do anything wrong," she started after seeing the hurt look on Harry's face and correctly interpreting his poorly masked feelings. "I promise we will do that again, but we need to get to work if we want to get you some clothes. Not that I mind you in just your skivvies."

“Really? Okay!” he replied beyond happy at the prospect of kissing Tonks again, and that she actually wanted to, made it that much greater.

The two spent the next hour and a half training Harry’s metamorph abilities, until he was comfortable making all the changes necessary, and being able to hold them for a length of time. Tonks’ used the different changes to examine Harry’s work by running her fingers all over his very differing body types, constantly arousing the teenage wizard and herself. It ended up being a very helpful exercise, forcing Harry to maintain changes to his body while his mind was working in overdrive to concentrate on them, when all he wanted to do was get lost in Tonks’ mouth and enjoy the incredible sensation she provided all over his body, anywhere her hands touched felt alive and stimulated to the tenth degree and drove the teenager crazy.

By ten o’clock that morning, Tonks was quite satisfied both with Harry’s ability to maintain concentration and the metamorph changes, and her exploration of his almost naked body. They slowly began the walk to Mrs. Figg’s house, enjoying the outdoors and the gorgeous summer day, both looking as they usually did to not arouse suspicion from others they would encounter, with the exception of a baseball cap that Tonks demanded he wear to help keep him hidden. They said a quick hello to the older squib and her endless stream of cats before flooing to the Leaky Cauldron, which was sparsely populated at this time of day.

They quickly made their way into muggle London without drawing any attention to themselves from the few pub occupants, and began making their way south towards the more populated muggle shopping district. They reached Harrods enormous department store after a comfortable walk, and wasted little time heading to the men’s clothing department. They spent only a little over an hour outfitting Harry with the basics, some jeans and slacks, nicer shirts, sweaters, exercise clothes, socks, and several pairs of various types of underwear since he didn’t know what he would like. They also stopped by the shoe department on their way to a register, and Harry quickly picked out two pairs of trainers as Tonks got him a pair of dress shoes for more formal occasions. They made it back to the register easily, and after arguing with Tonks that he would pay her back, Harry agreed to let

her put it on her muggle charge card and the pair left the large department store.

“Hey Harry, there’s a great store just down this street. Let’s get you a few t-shirts and some fun clothes and then maybe some lunch,” spoke the very happy pink haired auror as she dragged her charge down another street and towards their next destination.

They spent another hour inside the trendy store known as ‘The Bin’, where Tonks was in her element, and picked out several t-shirts for Harry, and even a few for herself. She even convinced Harry to try on a pair of tight black leather pants he would normally have never even looked at. Surprisingly, they weren’t that uncomfortable, and after some gentle ribbing from his companion, broke down and added them to his growing pile of new clothes, if nothing else than to wonder about the look the young auror had in her eyes when he showed them to her. After settling their bill, and promising to let the teenage wizard pay her back, Tonks lead Harry back in the direction of the Leaky Cauldron, before stopping at a small outdoor stand, and ordering a pair of fish & chip basket lunches. By two in the afternoon, the pair was returning back through Mrs. Figg’s, and walking back to Privet Drive with all of their purchases shrunk down in their pockets.

After returning to the apartment without running into any of the Dursleys and putting away his new clothes minus the outfit he was already wearing, Harry joined Tonks in the training room to continue with their lessons. For almost two hours the pair of metamorphs dueled exhaustively, pushing themselves harder as the day wore on, and allowing Harry to defeat the young auror at least twice. When it came to knowledge, tactics, and experience, Tonks far outstripped the younger wizard, who in turn could sometimes overpower, surprise, or out maneuver the slightly older female. Their duels were slowly becoming very even and productive; teaching spells, tactics, and strategies while gaining valuable practice and experience for Harry’s magic and metamorph abilities, and left both participants winded by the end of their eleventh duel.

“Hey Harry, let’s take a little break,” started the pink haired auror as she slowly began healing her own small nicks, cuts, and bruises that

both duelists had acquired, Harry even more so due to his more exaggerated and unorthodox movements. "I've got another surprise for you," she continued with a seductive wink, which both excited and confused the younger wizard.

"What kind of surprise?" he asked somewhat playfully at the look on Tonks' face as he began wiping his sweaty body with his workout towel and looking appraisingly at the happy and still slightly winded young auror.

"Don't get any ideas there Harry," she responded quickly, understanding all too well the look of hunger and passion in the wizard's beautiful green eyes. "You had better be on your best behavior when he gets here."

"He who?" asked Harry skeptically as he stared into Tonks' natural crystal-blue eyes trying to mask the fear that seemed to be creeping up from inside of him at her words.

"Are you jealous Harry?" she asked sweetly and teasingly as she recognized the uncertainty in his intense eyes and question in his voice.

"Hmmpf."

"Don't worry," she spoke softly as she walked up to the younger wizard and gave him a deep and hungry kiss that left him dazed and now even more confused if possible. "It's just Kingsley coming over to show you some basic martial arts," she added breaking out into uncontrollable giggles at the incredulous look on Harry's face at being lead on and teased so mercilessly.

"Oh," breathed Harry embarrassedly before shaking his head and giving the cute auror a happy and slightly dazed grin.

"He should be here in about ten minutes," she started importantly, "so; you better change back to normal, Kingsley would be able to spot that. We don't want anyone to figure out about your metamorphing abilities just yet, do we?"

“Sure thing Tonks,” he replied before screwing his face up in concentration, and letting the long silver hair and enlarged body return to its normal size as Tonks returned to her usual pink haired look as well.

Kingsley, like all wizards and witches had to enter the house at Privet Drive the muggle way on the first visit and at four o'clock that afternoon they heard his forceful knock on the apartment's door. Tonks immediately jumped off the sofa and answered the door to her long time friend and mentor in the auror department. Kingsley Shacklebolt, was quite the sight, standing over six feet tall, with his smooth bald head and darkened skin standing out against the pale linen pants and simple shirt he wore to exercise in.

“Wotcher Shack,” spoke Tonks friendly in greeting, standing aside to let the older wizard come in and take in the lay-out of Harry's new and improved apartment.

“Hi Tonks, Harry,” he replied with a glance at each of the apartments occupants, “How's your day been so far?”

“Brilliant,” replied Harry excitedly, slightly surprising the older auror and Order member who assumed the boy was still miserably depressed over losing his godfather so recently, and wondered what had turned the young wizard around.

“Really?” he asked, chancing a glance at his fellow auror who also looked to be in much better spirits than she had been the last few times they had met.

“You bet Shack, I got to take Harry shopping muggle style,” replied Tonks energetically, “and just told him about the martial arts lessons.”

“Great,” responded Kingsley easily, “let's take this to that training room Bill was so excited about last night.”

“Yeah, it's through here,” started Harry as he turned and led the two aurors through his bedroom and into the stone walled training room, one for the first time.

“Wow, I see why Bill was so excited now,” stated Kingsley as he inspected the cavernous room and could literally feel the traces of magic and protective wards that were practically bleeding off the walls and feeding the property’s wards.

Kingsley then spent the first lesson, a grueling two hours demonstrating several martial arts fighting styles and exercises to strengthen Harry’s body and control. The older auror focused primarily on Aikido and Jujutsu, the forms he grew up with and was most familiar, but covered a much broader range of self-defense and hand-to-hand combat techniques. By the time for dinner, Harry was sore all over his body, his muscles hurt from some of the new and very different movements, and his bones ached from being tossed around and trying to block the much larger auror’s attacks. Kingsley and Tonks were both quite impressed with Harry’s affinity for picking up and understanding the various moves and even some forms and katas that Kingsley demonstrated after only seeing them performed once.

“I can’t believe you’re still on your feet, your balance is incredible,” replied a somewhat surprised Kingsley Shacklebolt as he regarded the fifteen year old wizard in front of him. “Are you sure you’ve never learned this stuff before?”

“I’ve watched a few movies when Dudley was going through his Bruce Lee phase a couple years ago, or at least parts of them,” responded Harry thoughtfully.

“Well, I must say Harry, I am quite impressed,” replied Kingsley happily as they stopped to catch their breath. “I would have thought it would take weeks just to get down the basics. Even the auror recruits get a whole week to learn what I just showed you.”

“Thanks,” responded the younger wizard honestly. “I started doing Tai Chi the other day, and it’s really similar, just slower and more controlled. I really like the peacefulness of the many movements and forms, they are almost relaxing, and this stuff is even better except more taxing on your body.”



“I’m glad you like it, and you’re right it’s a great workout. Once you get more familiar with them, the forms become second nature and you actually apply a lot of the same breathing and meditation techniques employed in most Eastern forms of martial arts,” responded Kingsley laughingly at the look of excitement that crossed the younger wizard’s face as the words sunk in. “If you want, I can come back tomorrow at the same time. I’ve even got some books and videos that would be really helpful in getting you started.”

“Really? That’d be brilliant,” exclaimed Harry, causing the two aurors to both chuckle at his enthusiasm and seemingly boundless energy.

“Why don’t you go get dinner started, Kingsley and I need to talk about work for a few minutes,” added Tonks after a few seconds when they all seemed to realize that today’s lesson was over.

“Okay Tonks,” replied Harry, “Do you both like pot roast, and I’ve got plenty for all of us?”

“I absolutely love pot roast, that would be wonderful,” added Kingsley, excited to get the chance at a hot meal, especially one of his favorites.

Dinner that night was relatively upbeat, as Kingsley spoke at length about his own martial arts experiences, his Master or Sensei, and his continued auror defense training. He had been studying some form of martial arts since the age of eight, and now taught the self-defense class at Auror Academy on basic hand-to-hand combat. Tonks interjected at times with her own stories and experiences at the Auror Academy, which tended to be much funnier, and he started to wonder exactly how Tonks passed that particular class after some of the things she apparently got into.

Kingsley, true to his word did love the pot roast, and hungrily devoured several plates while complimenting the chef constantly who tried to match the older wizard’s appetite. It was already past eight in the evening when Kingsley and Tonks, after helping with the dishes, apparated back to their homes for the night. Tonks gave Harry a warm smile and a concealed wink as she disappeared, leaving him with a mixture of eagerness and loneliness.

Harry decided to return to reading Understanding Goblin Law, and by the end of the night had finished more than three-quarters of the long and informative tome. He greatly enjoyed learning more about Inheritance Laws and the governing body of the Goblin Nation, as well as the rules and regulations that ran the bank and Goblin Nation itself. He spent a final hour before sleep, organizing his thoughts and 'mind library' and assimilating the very full day into his consciousness. He ended up creating new shelves to store and compartmentalize his memories of both his very beginning knowledge of martial arts, and a shelf dedicated for only memories of Nymphadora Tonks.

He greatly enjoyed reliving those memories and assimilating them into new books while pulling things from other books to add to the collection of memories until every meeting between him and the young auror was catalogued together. He soon realized however, that the enjoyment and happiness he got out of those memories made it almost impossible to keep them put away on the shelf, mainly because of his difficulty in removing their emotional attachment. Good emotions hindered the Occlumency process equally as the bad ones, and it took Harry a good while to figure out the importance of the outward blank mask customary for Occlumency Masters. He slowly began to understand Snape's taunts of wearing his emotions on his face, and Harry could kick himself at not figuring it all out sooner. By the time for sleep, he was working on clearing his mind of all emotion at a moments notice, and despite the slow start, progress was indeed being made.

Tuesday proved to be quite uneventful, but nevertheless physically and magically tiring from start to finish. Because of Kingsley's scheduled visit, Harry decided to change around his schedule a little to better use his time alone, with Tonks, and with Kingsley. He stretched and ran for far longer than he ever had, before going through his many Tai Chi exercises and a little bit of weight lifting. After breakfast, Tonks and he would usually duel extensively all the way till two in the afternoon and then eat their late lunch.

Until Kingsley showed up at four, Tonks took some time to teach Harry a few more useful spells for offense, defense, and binding that were auror standards. They also managed to sneak in a few kisses during that time, to which Harry was more than happy to comply with,

having never enjoyed something quite so much. By the time of Kingsley's arrival at four, Harry was magically exhausted and only quite physically tired, but absolutely ready and eager to learn more from the veteran auror.

Kingsley ran Harry through the katas and forms from yesterday before showing him the next more advanced stages which he also picked up relatively easily except for his tiring body that led to a few mistakes towards the end. Kingsley also transfigured a heavy bag for punching and kicking and another smaller bag used for speed that was connected from floor to ceiling with thick elastic cables which he demonstrated for the wide eyed teenager. He also left three books; Aikido, Jujutsu, and Basic Kung Fu, as well as several VHS tapes that Tonks promised to help him with by getting a TV and VCR tomorrow.

After dinner, Tonks and Kingsley took their leave, both promising to be back at their normal times tomorrow, leaving Harry alone again in the apartment. Wandering over to his desk and the nearby book shelf, Harry grabbed the three small books from Kingsley and brought them over to the sofa and settled in for another night of studying. It took him just over two hours to read all three of the small books which only contained short histories and descriptions of the discipline along with hundreds of photos, muggle-style of the various techniques and movements.

The pictures were actually very helpful, and Harry was very intrigued to learn more about the many Eastern Martial Arts disciplines, especially some of the Aikido throws he couldn't wait to try on Dudley or Draco. He returned to his book shelf determined to find something else useful to study with all the time he had left in the night, but passed over Hermione's Ancient Runes and Arithmancy textbooks. He for some reason still wanted to wait on starting those two new subjects for the time being and was going to get his last year Charms textbook when he spotted the unmarked black leather journal of Lydia Lovegood, Unspeakables. Making a snap decision that he was maybe ready to deal with this book having finally sorted out his memories of the night, and wanting to read it before the upcoming Will Reading of his now dead godfather this Friday, he grabbed the

book and retreated to his bedroom notebook in hand preparing for a long night ahead of him.

AN: Chapter SIX! Good News ...I went out of town last week, and had several hours alone on multiple airplanes, and finished the difficult finale of Chapter 13, and am already half way through 14. Sorry the typing is so slow, but I'm a henpecker! Actually, that doesn't sound to good does it? I type slow, deliberately, and with only the first two fingers of each hand, and edit as I go ...bear with me!

I will not start posting my other stories until this is finished, I'm already slow enough with these updates, and I don't want to upset the loyal few readers I have gathered by spreading myself even thinner. Sorry if you're waiting for Hellatrix, but it will be awhile.

## Chapter 7

Getting into his bed and making himself comfortable, Harry opened the unmarked black leather journal and had to continually force himself to keep reading despite the memories the book referred to as Unspeakables brought out. He began with Luna's mother's introduction into what the journal contained, her own observations as an Unspeakable in the research department for over twelve years at the time of the journal. Despite the sensitive nature and somewhat difficulty to keep reading, Harry was amazed at everything Lydia Lovegood had accomplished.

The journal was incredibly detailed as it described the various rooms and departments within the famed 'Department of Mysteries.' Starting with the Ring of Doors and going through the various possible destinations including the Time and Brain Rooms, the Hall of Prophecies, the Pulsating Globe, and the Death Chamber. Harry was amazed to learn about the various rooms and inner workings of what went on in the bizarre department he and his friends had infiltrated a month previous.

He learned about the regulation and control of time turners and the history of time travel and its laws and limitations they discovered through testing, and he wondered how exactly Dumbledore had managed to get one for Hermione during her hectic third year. Until he learned which Unspeakable was in charge of the Time Room, Order of Phoenix member Sturgis Podmore, while Jonathan Bode was in charge of the Brain Room, studying brain activity and its reactions to stimuli both magical and muggle. The Breeding Center was run by a person Harry recognized from the night of Voldemort's rebirth, Amycus Carrows, while his twin sister Aletha Carrows was in charge of Magical Objects and often worked as Lydia's partner in the Research Department, Spells and Magics Division. Lydia was a Master of Charms, and dealt primarily with charmed objects, like port-keys, talismans, wards, amulets, and other magical foci.

The Hall of Prophecies was run by a Frenchman, Jacques Henri, who catalogued, labeled, and collected recordings of the infinite amount of globes that made up his library tirelessly, and Harry sent out a silent apology to him if he was still there cleaning up after him and his

friends. The most obscure department, dealt exclusively with the Pulsating Globe, was run by one man named Richard Hamilton. Apparently, he was quite unbalanced and very much the loner, leaving Lydia's knowledge of him and his department somewhat confusing and incomplete. There were several legends about the Hamilton family protecting the globe since it was discovered in the fallout of the Goblin Rebellion of 1724, but very little evidence as to what exactly it was.

He also learned more than he ever wanted to about the Death Chamber and the Veil of Death, a division run by one Xavier Yaxley, another familiar name from Voldemort's rebirth. He was disgusted to find history of the Veil, as well as records of its use up until 1937, when Azkaban prison was opened. Used as the last resort as the method of execution for all magical criminals, it was the only known archway of its type that still existed today. Yaxley himself had been with the department for over fifty years, and had spent that time studying the veil and the unknown runic language that marked the ancient dais.

The second half of the informative journal was even better than the descriptions, histories, and studies of the many divisions within the Department of Mysteries. Lydia was a member of the Research Division under Argus Croaker, an ancient hundred-twenty plus year old wizard who joined the Unspeakables in 1895. The Research Division was subsequently subdivided into smaller focused categories of Potions & Ingredients, Spells & Magics, and Beasts & Breeding with several members on each team who collaborated and shared knowledge and findings. Therefore, the final two hundred pages were full with incredible notes on spells and spell work, breeding, potions, ingredients, and inventions Harry had no idea were even possible or existed.

He became fascinated after coming to a completed set of instructions for a vision correction potion-spell combination, and instantly grabbed a few scraps of parchment to mark that and the other interesting things he came across on the pages. By the time he finished his first cursory read through the second half of the journal, he realized he had over twenty things marked for further study, and was determined to come back to them tomorrow and try to figure them out when he

had more time. As it was, it was fast approaching two in the morning, and Harry used several minutes to organize and clear his mind of the day and nights activities before settling into another comfortable sleep.

Wed. July 12th

Waking up refreshed only three hours later, Harry again marveled at the benefits of Occlumency and pushed through the pangs of guilt he felt for letting it get so bad until he forced him self to learn the discipline. Not that he had much choice with the greasy git yelling at him, teaching him nothing, and forcing him to relive his worst memories over and over again. 'Fucking Snape,' he thought bitterly as he remembered the unforgiving Potions Master and Head of Slytherin House. That was no way to learn Occlumency and Harry knew it, despite the fact that Voldemort would be ruthless too, that was no excuse to mind rape him every week with no clear instruction.

Tossing his thoughts of anger aside for the time being, he threw on a pair of shorts and headed to the training room for his morning workout. After a long run that left him winded and somewhat dizzy from all the small laps, he was determined to ask Tonks if he was allowed to go for a morning jog outside from now on. He moved on to his Tai Chi for some time, and then practiced some kicking and punching on the bags Kingsley left for him until it was time for a shower and breakfast.

At breakfast, Tonks unshrunk the TV and VCR she borrowed from her own apartment and left them in front of the den's sofa for her and Harry to watch the martial arts videos left by Kingsley. They then went to the training room, where a much larger and long silver haired Harry dueled exhaustively against the older auror, pushing his magic to its limits repeatedly. By lunchtime, the younger wizard was covered in a thick layer of sweat and panting heavily from exhaustion, while he was finding it easier to control and maintain his metamorph changes with every day and change he made.

He was still loosing over half the duels to the more knowledgeable and experienced auror, but was able to hold his own very well, and continually surprised Tonks with his unorthodox style and intense

power and speed. After lunch, Harry and Tonks settled on the sofa after quickly hooking up the TV and VCR, and managed to watch all three of the short martial arts videos with rapt attention until Kingsley showed up at the end of the final one. He was quite pleased that they had just watched the videos and that Harry had already read the muggle books on the various disciplines that Kingsley was familiar with, and was eager to get started and hopefully get in some sparing.

The two wizards squared off after an hour long warm up and run through the katas and techniques Harry had been shown or read about. This being the first time they were sparing, Harry was quite worried and slightly weary of the tall dark skinned auror, and with good reason.

“Umppff,” groaned Harry as he fell flat on his back after an overhand Aikido throw that momentarily knocked the wind out of his body.

“Are you alright Harry,” smirked Kingsley good naturedly from his standing position above the younger wizard, “maybe we should add some cushioning charms to the floors?”

“You think,” grumbled Harry sarcastically as he pulled himself off the hard matted floor to the growing laughter of both Kingsley and Tonks, who was watching off to the side and keeping a very unhelpful commentary going throughout the one sided fights.

“...Again,” spoke Kingsley for the seemingly hundredth time that day as he watched the struggling Harry rise himself from the floor and take up his place across from him still with a fierce look of determination etched on his sweaty and bruised face.

The two men circled one another slowly, both looking for a sign of weakness to exploit or an advantage to take. In the last several matches, Harry had finally managed to begin landing hits and blocking attacks with greater regularity, and was learning both from his opponent's attacks and his own mistakes. Harry continued to circle as the two combatants edged closer to one another, throwing harmless jabs and kicks to keep their opponent off balance, before Harry saw a small opening and instantly sprung to action.



As soon as Kingsley's jab came out again, Harry spun back from the way they were circling, barely avoiding the blow as he spun to Kingsley's now exposed left side. Sweeping his legs out from behind as he used a straight arm strike into the older auror's chest sending him crashing to the now cushioned floor. Harry stood above him in shock that he managed to land a successful hit and bested his teacher at least once, and ignored the squeals of excitement from Tonks as Kingsley gave a loud groan as he pulled himself from the floor with a combination of embarrassment and pride in his eyes as he looked up at his fast learning student.

"Nice hit Harry," started Kingsley proudly as he rubbed his sore chest slightly, "It looks like I'll have to pay a little more attention next lesson."

"Thanks," replied Harry proudly at the praise from the seasoned auror.

Harry stayed in the shower for an extra few minutes, letting the scalding hot water soothe his aching muscles and bruised body after the long workout with Kingsley. Dinner with the two aurors was filled with praise at how fast Harry was learning the martial arts and other spells that Tonks had been teaching him, and before long it was just before eight and time for the weekly Order meeting. After bidding Harry goodbye, Tonks and Kingsley left the apartment by apparating to headquarters, leaving Harry alone for his personal studies.

The two aurors arrived just in time for the Order meeting to begin, and spent much of that time bored as the group went over the temporary wards they were using at headquarters since Sirius' death. They made arrangements for Moody to do a scan of each room before Remus would pack them into separate trunks incase something happened at the Will reading in two days and they weren't able to get back in. After that they went over schedules for bringing everyone to the reading, and the numerous guards that would be posted at various locations. The meeting only lasted two hours until everyone was able to retire to their homes for the night, knowing they had another meeting tomorrow night as well.

SECTION BREAK

After the aurors left for their Order meeting, Harry grabbed Lydia Lovegood's Unspeakables journal and his ever growing notebook from the summer so far and spread everything out on his desk near the apartment's entrance. He re-read the research section and all the pages he had marked the previous night, and began taking frantic notes on all the marked spells and potions. For over two hours he filled countless pages of notes on newly and half-invented spells and potions, and Harry couldn't wait to give some of them a try.

The potion section was amazing, filled with every stage of the inventing and then brewing processes, and all the many problems they encountered and trials they ran. One such potion that was listed in its entirety was the Wolfsbane, a potion created in 1985 by Charles Sheppard and Rachel Sullivan in the Research Department right before this journal was completed. Many of the other potions dealt with sensory enhancements, but were usually incomplete or temporary.

The absolute best part of the potion section was at the very end, and dealt with a highly advanced potion and spell combination that was designed to fully mature and correct the shape of one's eyes to improve their vision. A warning from Lydia herself, who performed this exact potion-spell combination on her four year old daughter, was to wait until you had matured physically. The spell actually corrects the shape of the eye, but also makes it grow to its full maturity which according to Lydia caused a bulging eye effect to anyone not yet old enough.

"Well that explains why Luna's eyes seem so big," laughed Harry quietly to himself before moving on.

The invented spells section was also fascinating, and filled with both offensive and defensive spells that Harry had never even heard of, but seemed very helpful. The first of these was a very strong shield spell that could block anything short of the unforgivables, and actually feed off of and was strengthened when hit by another spell. Called the 'aegis fortis' shield, a slight and sharp movement of the wand straight up while speaking the incantation would produce the opaque silver colored magical shield that was much stronger than the standard protego and required a great deal more energy and

concentration to produce it, let alone maintain it, but it had great potential.

Another very powerful shield encircled the castor in a ring of magical fire, blocking most spells, and even some physical objects and attacks while ensuring that your opponent couldn't get too close to you. It required the castor to point your wand towards the ground in front of you and give a concise 360 degree clockwise motion while using the incantation 'circum incendio' or more commonly translated to Ring of Fire. Its major drawback was the obscuring of the castor's vision around or through the Ring of Fire, but then again, your opponent couldn't really see you either.

Out of the rest of the spells, two powerful offensive ones really stuck out in Harry's mind, both useful and similar. 'Lumeniveus tellum' or the arrow of white light, was exactly that, and was a magical arrow that could penetrate most physical barriers or shields. 'Nocturnegrus tellum' or the arrow of black night could penetrate almost all magical shields and barriers. Together, they would be a very powerful weapon, since they acted much like real arrows damage wise, and wouldn't kill anyone unless they hit in one of a few fatal locations. Since they were more point and shot type spells, Harry went to the training room and conjured several basic targets and began trying the two arrow spells which both proved quite difficult at first, both with power and accuracy.

He also worked on the two shields, which were both much more difficult. The 'circum incendio' wasn't too hard once he got frustrated and angry, and began paying more attention to the intentions behind these types of spells, having much better results. The 'aegis fortis' shield proved to be the hardest of the lot, and left Harry winded after finally getting it to work successfully an hour later. He was exhausted as he made his way back to bed when he realized it was well past one in the morning, and quickly went through and organized and cleared his mind before crashing comfortably into his fluffy down pillow.

Harry woke three hours later on Thursday morning still sore physically and exhausted magically, and took extra coaxing by his own desire to train to get out of bed and find his running shorts and a light t-shirt. Today he was going to go for his first run outside after

Tonks said it'd be okay, but would still ask at last night's Order meeting to be sure. Harry didn't care, he was too excited to get some fresh air, and that alone brightened his spirits and helped wake him up more fully. He quietly slipped downstairs in the dark house containing the three sleeping Dursleys, and headed out the front door into the cool morning air that the sun had yet to greet.

Harry figured that he would not run too far away from Privet Drive until he got the definite okay from Tonks, but was glad for any change of scenery. He stretched for a few minutes before taking off on a slow warm up jog towards Wisteria Lane. By the time he returned to Number Four's front door, the sun had risen and he had completed three laps around the neighborhood, far longer than he had ever managed in his training room, and loving every second of it. He was sweaty and red faced as he went through his few basic weight lifting and punching bag workouts before he ended with the more calming Tai Chi. He began using this alone time to strengthen his mind's Occlumency shields, as the quiet and meditative states were so similar, plus it gave him something else to do while he ran his body through its morning routine.

Tonks showed up as usual just before breakfast, and the two spent a few minutes planning the trip to Gringotts the next day for Sirius' Will Reading. She explained that Remus was going to accompany her tomorrow morning for breakfast before they took the Night Bus to Diagon Alley. She also mentioned that Albus, Hermione, and most of the Weasleys were all due to be there as well. They even talked about the possibility that the Malfoy's may be in attendance to stake their claim to the Black Family fortune, but that Harry need not worry, what would happen would happen. Goblins do not tolerate violence inside the bank, and there would be plenty of friendly faces around to help protect him if they tried anything, relieving the teenage wizard's worry.

"Everything will be fine Harry. I'll stay by your side the whole time if you want me to," spoke Tonks honestly as she cleared up the dishes of another great breakfast and gave the wizard a brilliant and warm smile.

"Thanks Tonks," he whispered while returning the smile before leaning towards her and capturing her lips in his own briefly, making his eyes and smile brighten considerably, never remembering a time he felt so happy, or enjoyed having someone to share kisses with.

"Don't mention it," she answered back just as excitedly matching the younger wizard's smile before remembering something that made her face and posture fall resignedly. "Harry, I don't think we can tell anybody about us ...I could get into a lot of trouble because you're still a minor."

"Oh ...I didn't think about that," he answered in obvious disappointment, not wanting to have to wait over a year to actually be with Tonks out in the open.

"Harry, you know I don't care about your age right?" she asked honestly, hoping to reassure the man that already meant so much to her no matter how old he was, "I want to be with you."

"Me too," he answered happily and with another wonderfully soft kiss to the pretty face of the smiling auror.

Minutes later, and the new couple began their dueling practice with a flourish, and after Tonks won the first two duels easily, Harry tried something a little desperate. Just as Tonks began the third duel, and started throwing a few lower level curses and jinxes, Harry summoned all of his will to throw up the aegis fortis shield. The opaque silver colored shield rippled slightly under the onslaught of the incoming first volley of spells, which only proved to strengthen it as the weaker curses collided and were absorbed into its form. After several minutes of firing more and more powerful spells trying to take down Harry's shield, and watching them have less and less affect, she stopped firing altogether.

"What the hell kind of shield is that?" she yelled somewhere between awe and frustration as she stared at the now gleaming almost solid silver dome that was still surrounding Harry.

"Sorry Tonks ...I had to try it," heaved Harry with a cheeky smirk on his tired and sweaty face, "It only worked though because you started

off with weaker spells. It's a shield that grows stronger every time a weaker spell comes in contact with it, but it's real hard to put up, and I don't think it would be too helpful in most duels with Death Eaters who just shot unforgivable curses from the start."

"What's it called, I've never even heard of a shield like that?" she asked wide eyed after listening to the shield's potential, and already thinking about ways to strengthen it quicker yourself.

"It's called the 'aegis fortis' ...or at least that's the incantation. The wand movements is just a sharp upward and pulled back flick of the wrist ...like this," replied Harry as he demonstrated the wand movements twice before speaking the incantation on the third attempt conjuring the rippling semi-opaque silver dome-like shield.

"Wow," murmured Tonks excitedly, "so how strong is it?"

"This one's not as strong as the last one started out as, it is still rather draining," started Harry, "but why don't you try something relatively strong to see how well it holds?"

"Okay," started Tonks as she backed up to take her shot, thinking about what spell to use that would be strong enough, but not too harmful if the shield didn't hold. "Fracta!"

The bright orangish-yellow light of the bone breaking curse crashed into the silver shield at an alarming rate. A loud crack echoed as the shield shattered into pieces like a pane of glass, allowing the curse to slam into Harry's shoulder, as he wasn't prepared to dodge once the shield fell. An even louder crack sounded as the curse shattered his collarbone an instant later sending him flying backwards towards the floor in obvious pain.

"Oh shit, are you alright Harry?" asked a breathless and scared Tonks as she ran towards and fell beside the fallen wizard.

"Yeah ...I'm ...fine ...the shield wasn't as strong as I had hoped," he replied shakily and breathlessly as he struggled to sit back up despite the pain that shot through his shoulder and the lack of feeling in his dangling left arm.

“Stop moving Harry,” started Tonks comfortingly. “Don’t worry about the shield right now; we’ll practice with it some more later. That was my strongest bone breaking curse.”

“Yeah, it felt like it,” he winced slightly after testing his arm and shoulder and realized that the curse worked and the shield didn’t.

“Sit still for a second, I’ll fix your collarbone,” she started in a no nonsense type of voice. “I’m no Pomfrey, but I can heal bones quite well.”

“Are you sure, I haven’t had much luck with other people healing my injuries, especially that dolt Lockhart,” he replied nervously.

“I promise you’ll be as good as new, I’m real good with broken bones honest,” reassured Tonks to the skeptical wizard who reluctantly nodded and obliged the young auror to let her do her thing.

A few short spells later, and a yelp of pain as the bone was reset, left Harry with an irritating itchy sensation as the bones knitted themselves together in his still slightly painful shoulder. Tonks then gave him a pain relieving potion which Harry greedily depleted despite his insistence that it didn’t hurt too much. Tonks just giggled knowingly to herself at Harry’s sudden macho pride, and thought it adorable that he didn’t want her to know how much pain he was in when it was one of her curses that did it.

The dichotomy of Harry Potter was sometimes baffling to the older metamorph and auror. Here was a celebrity in their world, maybe the biggest, that was more humble and grounded than any wizard she had ever met. A man some days, fighting Voldemort and his Death Eaters with unmatched bravery and training continuously, while a confused and shy boy when it came to his feelings and abilities which he continually downplayed. She marveled, not for the first time, at how truly unique and incredible the younger metamorph was. He had a way about him that just demanded respect and drew you in, people would follow him to Hades and back because of their belief in him, and the compassion and belief he had and inspired in those around him. He was a born leader of the best kind because he truly cared

about the safety and well being of those around him, and would do anything in his power to help them. He was the epitome of the word selfless, he had already given more than anyone to the fight against Voldemort and his followers, and still had a burning desire to do even more, no matter the personal costs to him. He was truly astounding.

“Are you feeling any better?” she asked after stopping her internal debate over the wizard that made her want to share every bit of her life with, and would do just about anything for, before fixing him with a very compassionate gaze.

“Yeah Tonks, thanks,” he breathed out evenly trying to regain his composure after his arm and shoulder started to slowly feel a bit better.

“Why don’t we take a break today,” started Tonks after several more seconds as an idea formed in her mind. “You go take a shower, and I’ll pop back to my apartment to get us a treat for today.”

“Okay,” replied Harry, clearly confused as to what Tonks had in mind as a treat, but happy to spend any time that he could with the fun loving metamorph doing whatever she wanted.

When Harry got back to the den after his slow shower, Tonks was already back and sitting comfortably on the sofa with a large tub of popcorn in her lap. He was delighted to see her anxiously waiting for him to arrive, and approached the sofa quietly and unnoticed by the young auror. He noticed a small stack of VHS tapes on the table and a pair of coke’s while the smell of the popcorn made his mouth water hungrily.

“Hey Tonks,” announced Harry, startling the oblivious auror who jumped in her seat and gave a slight squeak at being caught off guard that made Harry snort in amusement.

“Merlin Harry ...you scared me to death,” she replied exasperatedly as she shot a mock glare at the now openly smiling wizard.

“Sorry Tonks,” he replied easily and with a growing smile that made the auror wonder just how sorry he was.



"You better be careful, I'll get you back for that Potter," she sneered jokingly before bursting out in giggles at the look of horror that flashed across Harry's face momentarily.

"Ha ...ha ...Nymphadora," joked Harry back as he sent his own mock glare at the giggling metamorph.

"You better watch yourself there Potter," she sneered back menacingly, but thankfully not angrily at the mention of her first name and it excited the younger wizard greatly.

"I'd much rather watch yourself, dear Nymphadora," he finished much smoother than he thought himself capable, sending excited shivers over Tonks' skin.

"Okay ...you win," gave up Tonks easily after watching Harry's eyes light up with joy during their exchange, and wanting to get started with her plan for the morning. "Now come and sit down so we can watch a movie."

The two spent the time before lunch curled up on the sofa in each others arm as they first watched an American film called "The Usual Suspects" which was in fact very good even though Harry didn't pay attention to most of it. They then watched one of the few James Bond movies that Tonks had brought called "Golden Eye" which Harry really enjoyed. The British secret agent with all of his gadgets and difficult situations he finds himself in, was easy for Harry to relate to, and was excited to watch more of the few Tonks brought, as well as the countless others she said there were. The time they spent was very comfortable for Harry who had never really experienced any sort of intimacy with another human being, and probably couldn't with any other. He had rarely if ever felt as content and at ease as he did just lying around doing nothing with the girl of his dreams next to him snuggled on the sofa.

They shared a light lunch before watching another older Bond movie called "If Look Could Kill" which led them right up to four o'clock and the arrival of Kingsley Shacklebolt. They all returned to the training room where Harry and Kingsley spent almost three hours sparing one

another. The older auror dominated the younger less-experienced but very quick young wizard keeping him on the defensive for most of that time. Harry would occasionally score a few offensive blows here and there, but spent most of the time blocking the larger man's relentless attacks, learning from his mistakes as he went, and starting to understand the purpose of the many different forms they had been learning. Much of the moves were very similar, and he started remembering the moves that ran together seamlessly, and began having a greater affect blocking his opponent's attacks and forcing longer fights.

It was a tired and bruised Harry that dragged himself to the shower, letting the hot water soothe his aching body yet again, before getting dressed and ready for dinner. He returned to the den to see Tonks and Kingsley already sitting down with large bowls of stew in front of them and chatting happily. Harry retrieved his own bowl of the wonderful beef stew he had made earlier, and made his way to the sofa and the now laughing aurors.

"...and then he starts yelling at Amelia and demanding that a new monitor be put in place," continued Kingsley still trying to control his own mirth, "...and she just says ...'I'd be happy to Cornelius, as soon as we get through all the red tape required that your Underage Monitoring Laws put into place after last year's travesty of justice against Mr. Potter."

"She didn't?" gasped Tonks between hysterical side-splitting laughter which echoed loudly much to Harry's amusement.

"What's so funny?" asked Harry with a smile as he came over with his food to the laughter of the aurors.

"Just Fudge being the git he is," replied Tonks between her still calming fits of laughter. "I'll tell you tomorrow Harry. Kingsley and I have another Order meeting tonight to finalize Order plans for tomorrow."

"Right," replied Harry as he remembered with dread that tomorrow was Sirius' Will Reading. "Are you still coming by in the afternoon tomorrow Kingsley?"

"That sounds like a great idea Harry," started Kingsley warmly, "it should do us some good to work off some steam."

"Yeah," mumbled the teenager who knew he would probably have plenty of 'steam' to work off tomorrow.

"Don't worry Harry, Remus and I will be here for breakfast," spoke Tonks with a comforting smile hoping to alleviate some of the teenager's fears she knew he was still struggling with.

"Okay, I'll see you both tomorrow then," replied Harry with a slight pang of worry in his voice as he thought about what tomorrow would bring.

The silence that followed the two auror's departure left an emotional Harry to deal with his pain of losing his godfather to himself. He missed Sirius so much, even after a month, it hurt his chest to think about the former Marauder and that he was in fact gone for good. Despite the help that Occlumency provided, Harry was still depressed and sad that the closest thing he had to a father was gone, leaving him to deal with life without the help of any parental figures.

In his growing grief, Harry could feel the emotions he had to remove from his memories returning full force, cluttering up his mind library and weakening the walls that protected his mind. He collapsed back into the sofa in his apartment's den and began weeping silently for all those he had lost in his life, and all the pain and torment he had suffered already. Almost an hour later, and the teenage wizard was emotionally spent as his tears had dried up, and his body still ached with grief and guilt.

Slowly, Harry began to feel his magical core pulsate heavier each second, giving him something else besides his own pain to focus on. The rhythmic thumping was somewhat comforting, relaxing the stressed out body and mind of the young wizard. He held on to the pulsating feeling for a long while until he began to trying to slow it down and speed it up on his own, a task that demanded all of his concentration and focus and took his mind off his recent troubles.

He remembered the other previous pulsating incidents with great clarity, and realized that the two previous times both functioned as a defense mechanism of his magical core, to remove the influence of Voldemort through his curse scar. Entering that core through meditation, he could see the black magic tendrils seeping out of the blasted curse scar from Voldemort slowly but continuously. The pulsating had removed that which had begun settling again upon his core, and now there were just the slow growing tendrils from the scar trying to get to and enclose and strangle his magical core.

He focused on that core, willing it to drive away the angry dark black tendrils of Voldemort's magic, forcing them back through the curse scar that connected the two. Almost instantly, he heard a distant scream of pain inside his head that he immediately recognized as belonging to the same Dark Lord. He continued to push his magic at the connection with everything he had, reveling in the feeling that he was able to turn the table on Voldemort if only just this once. He could see the Dark Lord writhing on the ground in a familiar room before he felt a surge of power rush through the curse scar pushing his own magic back before he bore down and with a final shove of force drove the black magic back before slipping into unconsciousness due to his magical exhaustion.

## SECTION BREAK SINCE FANFICTION HATES LINES

"...very well Wormtail," hissed the cold voice of the Dark Lord Voldemort as he sat in the high backed chair of his muggle father's ancestral home in Little Hangleton. "But do not interrupt me again."

"Yes my Lord," squealed the rat like man with fearful watery black eyes as he bowed at his master's feet before trying to back out of the room without punishment.

"Oh yesss Wormtail, I almosst forgot ...crucio," hissed the Dark Lord as he reveled in hearing his follower's scream of agony echoing off the walls of the ancient Riddle Manor.

Ending the curse, Voldemort watched as the pathetic rat animagus struggled back to his feet trying to leave as soon as possible. Before he had made it a few steps however, he heard a sound so foreign to

him that it sent shivers of fear up his cowardly spine. The Dark Lord, the most powerful wizard alive was screaming out in absolute pain, clutching his forehead in his thin parchment white hands. As he collapsed to the floor writhing in pain almost as if under the cruciatus curse, Wormtail rushed forward in absolute fear and came to his master's twitching and screaming side.

"My Lord?!" exclaimed Peter Pettigrew urgently and in a state of panicked fear.

"...y-your ...a-arm," rasped out the Dark Lord between bouts of unbearable pain unlike any he had experienced as he clutched his forehead forcefully trying to block out the pain.

"Ahhhhhh!" screamed the rat animagus as his Lord grabbed his forearm covering the tattoo of the Dark Mark with his palm causing it to burn like never before.

Voldemort held his grip on his Mark firm, ripping the magic from his connected followers with reckless abandon as he struggled to fight the pain exploding through his head like an ice pick. It only took a second for Wormtail to be drained of magic dramatically before passing out from magical exhaustion while the Dark Lord continued to use him as the vessel to pull even more magic and energy towards him. He felt the added rush of his followers' magic boost his own rapidly depleted core and attack back at the unbearable pain. It seemed to be working for half a second before a virtual tidal wave of magic crashed back through his head causing him to collapse to the ground unconscious in a small puddle of blood and suffering a severe case of magical exhaustion.

## SECTION BREAK AGAIN

"Is there any more business to discuss tonight before we retire for the night?" asked Albus Dumbledore as he glanced around the table of a cleaned out Number Twelve Grimmauld Place and the faces of his Order of the Phoenix.

"I believe we are all prepared for tomorrow's activities," spoke Arthur Weasley somewhat tiredly after the long day, and in preparation for another.

"Very well ...Severus is there any news to report about Voldemort?" continued Albus as he gazed with his twinkling blue eyes at his Potions Master and spy.

"The Dark Lord had holed himself up in his private study. I've only seen him on- ...ahhhhhh!" started Severus before a throat ripping scream erupted from his mouth and tore through the Ancient and Most Noble House of Black as he clutched his forearm in utter pain before collapsing in a heap on the ground.

"Minerva, floo Poppy, get her here now!" shouted Albus amongst the several cries of panic after the collapsed spies screams of pain, as he knelt next to his friend and protégé.

Dumbledore ran a general magical scan and paled instantly at the results, just as he felt the floo connection flare and seconds later Madam Pomfrey came rushing into the kitchen with supplies in hand and the Deputy Headmistress right on her tail. She wasted no time examining one of her most familiar patients, and after hearing the results of Albus' scan and verifying it herself with a more comprehensive one, she too paled at the severely low levels of magic that were barely detectable. She immediately started putting several restoratives, strengthening, and pain-relief potions down Snape's unconscious throat as the Order members looked on in shock and fear.

Albus Dumbledore was scared for his spy, had Voldemort found him out and tried to kill him through the foul Dark Mark? Whatever it was, it didn't look good, and he desperately needed to know what happened to have a chance of helping Severus. He announced that he would be right back, and headed to the floo and through to his office at Hogwarts; hoping one of his many magical sensors and instruments would be able to tell him something.

The second he entered the office, he froze at the sight. The two most prominent instruments that he had, both set to the raven haired Boy-

Who-Lived, were whizzing uncontrollably, notifying the Leader of the Light that the situation was much direr than he anticipated. Did Voldemort find a way to attack Harry? Then why did Severus collapse? What is the connection?

Glancing around the room with practiced care, he noticed little else out of order until a shrill cry from his companion Fawkes brought their eyes together for a brief moment as they shared a silent mental conversation. Then in a quick move, the phoenix landed on his shoulder and the two disappeared in a flash of red and gold flames.

Arriving back at the kitchen of Grimmauld Place in the same flash of flames, Dumbledore brought silence to the still slightly panicked room. Severus had been moved to a separate room by Poppy and Minerva who was just now returning. Moody stood off to one side of the room with the auror contingent of Kingsley, Hestia, and Tonks, along with Remus. Another group of Dedalus, Arthur, Molly, Bill, Filius, and Hagrid all froze at his arrival, awaiting his orders.

“Portus,” spoke Dumbledore as he pulled out a length of rope and tapped it with his wand causing it to glow blue for a second before looking around at the Order members gathered. “Alastor, Minerva, Kingsley, Hestia, Nymphadora, Remus, Bill and Arthur, you’re all coming with me ...everyone else will remain here until you receive further word from me.”

“Albus, where are we going?” asked Alastor ‘Mad-Eye’ Moody as he removed his wand and prepared himself for the port-key to activate, a move copied by all the others preparing to leave as some of their worst fears flashed before them in the tense moment to follow.

“Privet Drive,” he replied soberly, causing a gasp of fear from several in the room including Tonks as she wondered what happened to her emerald eyed wizard before everyone grabbed hold of the port-key. “Ready? ...Activate.”

The group of Order members arrived with a thud out front of Number Four Privet Drive to find the street empty and cloaked in darkness. The group followed Remus who took off running for the front door the moment he was on his feet, only to be beaten by an apparating

Tonks who was already keyed into the wards. The group arrived in the den of Harry's apartment to find the young metamorph auror kneeled down next to the pale and unconscious Boy-Who-Lived holding one of his cold hands in hers as she desperately tried to get him to wake on his own.

"His scar's bleeding!" gasped Remus Lupin as he was the next person to arrive only to find a good amount of dried and fresh blood covering much of his pale face.

"Let me through Remus," spoke the grave voice of their ancient leader as he approached the unconscious and still bleeding boy with a fierce determination mixed with absolute fear.

As Dumbledore leaned over to examine Harry by performing a few magical scans and cleaning the dried blood from his face, Fawkes arrived in a flash of flames above them before settling near the young wizard's head and starting a sad trill of Phoenix song. Albus continued his work, running the same scan he had on Severus only minutes before practically, and found similarly low levels of magic, but no where near as low as his Potion Master causing him to shake his head in confusion. Harry had obviously used a great deal of magic recently since the air in the apartment was thick and palpable with lingering traces of magical energy so raw and powerful that it scared Albus for a few moments.

He was still surprised at the level of magic that Harry still had, even in his unconscious state was more than most Order members on their best days, and had to wonder what had truly happened to the fifteen year old wizard. He thought back to the many times Harry spent under Madam Pomfrey's care, but couldn't remember him ever showing signs of this level of magical energy, even if his reserves were greatly reduced from whatever happened. Something was definitely different and didn't seem to add up, and the Headmaster was willing to bet that the only one with the answers he wanted was lying before him under the close watch of his familiar Fawkes and the worried Nymphadora Tonks.

The ending of Fawkes' song broke his internal dialogue as the phoenix allowed two pearly tear drops to fall directly upon the raw



and still slightly bleeding lightening bolt scar on the unconscious wizard's forehead. The angry hiss that emitted as the purely magically healing tear drops touched the mark of the black magic scar left by Voldemort caused most in the room to suck in their breathes in fright. Albus watched his familiar comfort the young wizard he was so fond of, knowing how valuable the two beings were to him and the fight versus darkness.

"Harry ...come on, wake up," whispered Tonks into his ear as she slowly began running a hand through his untamed raven black hair in a soft comfortable way that nobody seemed to think anything about, trying to bring Harry back to the conscious world.

"I think he's waking," answered Dumbledore moments later in absolute relief as he saw the first signs of movement and sat back to give the young wizard some room when he did finally come to.

Harry vaguely heard a distant mumbling of many familiar voices, but couldn't in his still hazy mind place them or their speakers. His entire body felt drained and sore, like he had been trampled by a hippogryph, and he wondered how and where he was before his memories of earlier slowly started to replay. Slowly he tried opening his eyes, only to be blinded by the bright light around him, forcing him to shut them quickly in pain and let a small groan escape his lips.

"Harry, can you hear me?" asked Albus Dumbledore happily but with held back tears in his eyes as he watched the boy he cared so much about struggle back to the waking world while a sense of relief washed over him.

"Hmmpf ...bright," he rasped with a scratchy throat as he tried opening his eyes again to the bright lights around him.

"Thank you Remus," started Dumbledore as the werewolf in question had turned off the apartment's overhead light, leaving only a soft glow from the kitchen area that filled the den with a low level glow of light.

"Remus?" asked Harry scratchily, but with obvious confusion in his voice, "i-is it morning already?"

“No my boy,” replied Dumbledore warmly and with a relieved smile on his ancient and lined face as he handed Harry a conjured glass of water which he quickly drank before the Headmaster could continue. “We had an accident of sorts ...Severus collapsed after grabbing his Dark Mark, and is now suffering from severe magical exhaustion.”

“That cheat!” shouted Harry as he snapped up to a sitting position and opened his eyes quickly eliciting a gasp of surprise from some of those present at their intensity. “So that’s how he fought back!”

“Harry?” questioned his Headmaster with overwhelming curiosity and apprehension.

“Oh right,” started Harry shyly, knowing he would have to confess what he was doing, and feeling slightly apprehensive with all the people gathered. “...well ...I kind of attacked Voldemort through my scar ...I think.”

“You WHAT?!” screamed Minerva McGonagall from the shocked group of Order members gathered around his coffee table.

“U-Um ...well ...you see ...I-I was examining my core again ...and I saw those black tendrils again, but I didn’t know where they were coming from ...so I ...I tracked it back to it’s source,” stumbled the teenage wizard in the face of so many stern and disbelieving looks as he tried to explain what exactly had happened for Professor Dumbledore.

“Your scar?” answered the wise wizard after a few seconds deliberation as a growing twinkle came through his clear blue eyes to the silent and confused Order members.

“Yeah,” breathed Harry slowly as his hand instinctively went up to rub his lightening bolt scar, surprised to find it not hurting at all, not even a twitch. “Thank you Fawkes,” continued the young wizard as he realized the cause of his new found peace still perched upon the back of the sofa he was currently sitting up on.

He was quite relieved to not be having the scar pains that he had become so accustomed to, and it almost seemed as if his head truly

cleared for the first time he could remember. The comfort and clarity of mind it brought with it was astounding, and Harry's true thanks went out to the amazing phoenix that had already saved his life, provided his wand's core, and now gave him another almost greater gift, 'peace of mind.' He still didn't know what exactly to make of his most recent core battle, but something told him that his scar pains were a thing of the past as long as he maintained the barrier on his end, something he was grateful for. Now it would hopefully be just like all his other scars that Tonks was so worried about ...Tonks was here!

Harry's eyes swept the room more carefully, no longer focusing on his Headmaster to his right, and searching for the young metamorph on his other side clutching his left arm tightly. The glossy look in her eyes told him everything he wanted and needed to know at that moment, and brought him an incredible feeling of warmth and gratitude. She was not at all worried about The-Boy-Who-Lived, a weapon, or the Chosen One, only the skinny and shy young wizard he truly was, she only cared and was worried about Harry. The smile that lit up his face as the feelings of joy and acceptance washed over him was something unseen for over a year on the young wizard's usually much older looking face, really pointing out his true age and youthfulness and surprising those gathered who expected him to be brooding, moody, and miserable as he was all of the last year.

"Harry ...are you alright?" asked Remus tentatively, after having heard from Tonks he still hadn't believed it, but looking at the smile that reached and brightened his beautiful eyes, Lily's eyes, he knew that his cub was going to be okay causing a big piece of his own worry and guilt to begin breaking away before he was even answered.

"Yeah, I am actually doing pretty well ...considering," spoke the teenager lightly as he turned his intense eyes on the weary Marauder and continued to smile quite brightly, but with the slightest touch of sadness that Remus could knowingly detect from his eyes and words.

"I am so happy to hear that Harry," started Remus as his amber-grey eyes met the brilliant green of his best friend's son. "I am quite proud of the man you have become cub, and know they all would be too."

"Thanks Moony ...that really means a lot," replied Harry as he continued to smile and suddenly looked up above his mantle to the mural he had painted of his godfather and parents on their wedding day causing several others to follow his gaze and gasp in surprise at the beautiful muggle style portrait that adorned the wall.

Looking at the painting had brought out a low hum inside Harry that felt like it was energizing and protecting him all at once as it slowly built to where it spread throughout his body. The same warm glow of magic running through his own body suddenly pushed outward and extended throughout the den like a ripple of magical energy. Every Order member except Tonks and Dumbledore, who had both witnessed something similar from the green eyed wizard before, gasped as the feeling of warmth and power crashed right through their bodies like a wave of electricity that left them frozen to their spots with wide eyes for several long seconds afterwards.

"What was that?" asked Alastor Moody skeptically as his magical eye spun restlessly in every direction possible following the traces of magic that flooded the room and his own senses while his good eye glared between Harry and Dumbledore looking for an answer.

"That Alastor ...I believe is Mr. Potter's excess magic being released from his body ...somewhat similar to what Nymphadora and I experienced previously, but still very different from the last time, seeing as this was done consciously" began Dumbledore with his customary twinkle directed at the young wizard as he explained the situation as best he knew how, which was to guess ...wildly and surprisingly accurately. "Harry, can you tell us what happened tonight with Voldemort before we came?"

"Yes sir," started Harry happy to be back on track, "so ...I was pushing my magic at the scar, trying to drive back the black tendrils and put a barrier in front of the scar when all of a sudden I kind of pushed through the scar. I could feel Voldemort in pain, and I saw through his eyes and thought he was alone in the same room he met Barty Crouch Jr. before the Triwizard Tournament, now that I know who that was. So anyway, I kept pushing, and it seemed to be working because he was weakening, but his screams brought Wormtail into view ...and suddenly he was resisting and fighting back

with incredible strength so I made one final push with everything I could ...and I guess I blacked out cause next thing I remember is being woken up by you.”

“Well, that does help explain things much better than I could have even hoped ...thank you Harry,” replied Dumbledore with the customary twinkle in his eyes as he looked upon the younger wizard with pride and compassion plainly shining through. “We were in a meeting when Severus clutched at his Mark unexpectedly, screamed, and then passed out from magical exhaustion seconds later. It is now my belief that Voldemort used the magic of his followers through the Dark Mark that links and binds their very soul and magic to him. He then used that combined effort to fight back, and judging that you are not suffering near as much as Severus was; I hope to think you were successful. I am very proud of you Harry and you will have to tell me how the connection and now the barrier you’ve made may change in the coming days. Hopefully it will prove the end of your scar pains and help in your attempts at Occlumency,” finished the old Headmaster wistfully to the shocked and speechless Order members.

“Thank you sir,” returned Harry slightly embarrassed at the looks he was getting from some, “um ...sir, did you say that Voldemort can borrow the magic from anyone with a Dark Mark? How does he do that?”

“Yes, unfortunately he can,” started Dumbledore somberly, “through a dark twisting of an ancient version of the Protean Charm with components of a blood slave bond added in, it is not pretty or easy magic,” he finished with a hard edge to his face and voice that was so different from his usual tone.

“Thank you sir,” replied Harry equally stone faced as his mind tried to absorb this new piece of information that would make it even more difficult to hurt the Dark Lord as long as he had Death Eaters to draw more magic from.

“It is getting late Harry, we’ll see you tomorrow,” spoke Dumbledore as he slowly stood up and straightened his long midnight blue and gold bordered cloak before glancing at the faces of the Order

members and fumbling for the piece of rope in one of his many pockets. "Is everyone ready? ...portus."

"Remus and I will see you tomorrow for breakfast okay," whispered Tonks before she too stood and joined the others around Dumbledore for the port-key trip back to Grimmauld Place.

A few seconds later, and Harry was again alone in his apartment, and for whatever the reason felt relatively refreshed and awake despite the late hour. Deciding to use the few hours until he went to bed to check up on his Occlumency shields and defenses, he got comfortable on the den's sofa and got to work. When he tried to enter his mind library this time, he was pulled through his own swirling magic that seemed to be providing another defensive element that greatly strengthened his progress to date.

The power he felt himself get wrapped up in, seemingly judged him momentarily before depositing him inside his cozy little mind library. Sitting in his mind's comfortable chair, Harry could see the walls of his library that he created glowing and pulsating in rhythm with his magic, bringing an extra level of comfort in his ability to grasp the difficult mental discipline. He studied the walls for several moments until he quickly went through organizing and cleaning up his mind of the day's events, a process that he seemed to be getting more efficient with after every time working on it. He had time to strengthen first the volumes of knowledge contained within his mind, then the actual set up of the 'library' and shelves, before going back to studying and slowly strengthening the walls of his mind from the inside.

When he went to the outside of his mind, he was immediately swept up and scrutinized by his own magic, unable to move from the grasp of its powerful white folds before recognizing him and leaving him with a feeling of being gently wrapped in a warm blanket of magical energy. It left him with an incredible feeling of connection to his magic, and filled him with power and comfort as he relished in its welcoming warmth. He let his magic run through him, surrendering himself to it completely, and allowing it to fill his entire being as it seemingly strengthened itself and its connection to Harry. Maintaining the feeling for a long while, he slowly began to tire and had to bring the

magical emersion to an end. It was past two a.m. when Harry returned to his present body, and instantly felt a wave of fatigue hit, causing him to drag himself towards his bed and crash after removing most of his clothes, asleep before his head hit the pillow.

AN: Thanks everyone for reading or reviewing, I'm almost finished writing chapter fourteen, but am now only on chapter eight (Sirius' Will) with my slow ass typing ...sorry.

I want to dedicate this chapter to The Liberty Bar in San Antonio, the best restaurant in town, and my lunchtime haven for writing this story every day.

## Chapter 8

Harry woke up at five a.m. on the morning of Sirius' Will Reading, feeling much better than he would have expected only a few weeks ago. Thinking about the only parental figure he had ever known, no longer brought forth the torrent of pain, guilt, and anguish he felt for the days following that dreaded night in the Department of Mysteries. It still hurt, and quite a bit, but Harry had experienced true feelings of growth and personal betterment over the last few weeks since learning of the prophecy, and that took some of the sting out of those wounds.

That night in the Department of Mysteries, Sirius' death, Voldemort's possession, and then of course the Prophecy, had such an impact on who Harry now was, who he thought he should be. It was both the single worst moments of his already pretty crappy life, and also the impetus of his new proactive training and personal betterment. True his parent's death, and even the Final Task of the Tri-Wizard were horrible, but the loss he felt for his parents and Cedric, people he hardly knew at all, was nothing like the loss of Sirius was to him now.

But still, Sirius' death brought with it a great many changes already, and left him devoid of any true parental guardian and destroyed what little was left of his childhood innocence. But in his utter grief he had found his own magic through the pulsating incidents, which proved to be the biggest blessing in his time at Privet Drive with the possible exception of Tonks. It left him free to practice and learn magic over the summer until they could fix his trackers, something he desperately needed if he wanted to survive any more encounters with Voldemort or his Death Eaters, of which he knew, would come eventually.

Getting out of bed and pulling on a pair of shorts and a tee, Harry left number four for a long and strenuous run around Little Winging. By seven he was back in the training room doing his Tai Chi and weight lifting exercises until just before eight when he dragged his sweaty and exhausted body into the shower. After the quick rinse, he got dressed in a nice pair of dark grey charcoal pants and a dark green oxford shirt before putting on his dark grey almost silver dress robes that Tonks had gotten him for this occasion earlier in the week. When



he emerged from his room, he found Tonks and Remus already sitting at the den's table in relative silence as Moony was mostly looking at the paintings of his school friends above the mantle. He was wearing midnight blue robes with steal grey piping, while Tonks wore a very pretty light silver dress robe with thin black trim which Harry found quite attractive as he walked towards the kitchen to start breakfast and interrupt the growing silence.

"Hi Tonks, Moony," he replied sedately as he began to move around the small kitchen gathering the necessary ingredients and beginning to prepare breakfast for the three of them.

"Wotcher Harry," responded Tonks happily as she smiled warmly at the young wizard and gave him a quick wink when she caught his gaze.

"Good morning Harry," replied Remus softly as his eyes studied the fluid movements of his friends' son, realizing they were the last two of his pack, and not trusting his voice to say much more.

"Morning ...are eggs, potatoes, and bacon good for you?" asked Harry as he started cutting up potato wedges as the frying pans began to heat up, sizzling behind him.

"Yummm," responded Tonks cheerfully, not wanting to see these two men so depressed despite what they were all heading to do.

"Sounds perfect," responded Remus with a small smile that never quite reached his eyes as he watched Tonks' eager excitement trying not to let them get too down.

The three figures ate quickly in silence, all thinking about what was to come at Sirius' Will Reading. For Harry, the nervousness and anxiety was far outweighing the sadness that he was desperately trying to keep in check. Similar to how it was at the beginning of the summer, when every thought or mention of Sirius brought with it a fresh stab of pain and guilt, he tried valiantly to remember his Occlumency and meditation exercises to remove the strong emotions he was feeling from his mind and face. As his breath calmed and relaxed, Harry was able to think clearly and managed to sequester his feelings of Sirius

to a trunk he created in his mind library that would temporarily contain the very powerful and present emotions he had of his beloved godfather. With his emotions in check, and his mask back firmly in place over his stoic face, Harry finally felt to be as ready as he ever would, and wanted to get this over with.

He gathered the finished dishes of his breakfast companions and washed them quickly while Tonks and Remus stood and prepared to leave. Harry wordlessly followed Remus out of Privet Drive with Tonks next to him shooting him reassuring glances and smiles of support. They walked away from the Dursley's house before Remus pulled out his wand, summoning the Night Bus or in this case the Day Bus to bang into existence before them only seconds later.

"Welcome to the Day Bus, emergency transport for the stranded witch or wizard," spoke a crackly high voice of the familiar conductor. "I'm you conductor, Stan Shunpike ...where you headed?"

"Leaky Cauldron for all three of us," spoke Remus quickly as he glanced the area around them suspiciously, keeping a look out for any unwanted visitors as they prepared to leave.

"That's fourteen sickles apiece," responded Stan completely oblivious to the heightened awareness of the three standing nervously before him.

Remus paid for all three of them before they boarded the almost empty bus and finding seats towards the back and away from the doors. The uncomfortable ride passed quickly, as they talked very little to avoid losing their wonderful breakfast in the jerkiness of the bus' travel. A little over five minutes passed before the bus came to a stop in front of the Leaky Cauldron, the dingy pub that served as the gateway into the magical community.

"Just keep your head down Harry," spoke Tonks from his side as they pushed open the door and entered the relatively empty pub.

"Hey Remus," shouted the pub's owner and operator, a portly and friendly wizard known world wide as simply, Tom. "What can I get you?"

“Nothing now Tom,” replied Remus quietly as he walked past the long bar and the smiling barkeep, “...maybe on the way out.”

Leading everyone to the back room, and magical gateway, Harry spared a quick glance at the alley he was always so fond of before lowering his gaze to avoid drawing any unwanted attention to himself. He was not too surprised at the severe lack of activity in the normally bustling shopping district due to the Ministry finally admitting to Voldemort's return, but thankfully it was busy enough so that he would not stick out too much. Keeping his head down, he followed Remus as he led him and Tonks to the large white marble building at the alley's center, the Goblin Bank, Gringotts.

Harry didn't raise his head until he and Tonks followed Remus into the bank and the doors shut behind them. Sparing a quick glance at Tonks, who smiled sympathetically towards him, Harry let his mask slip slightly as he returned the smile with watery eyes as he struggled once again to keep his emotions in check. He took several deep calming breaths, pushing his emotions tighter into the container he created in his mind, before his face returned to the stoic blank mask he had worn most of the morning, and would probably wear for the rest of the day.

“Remus Lupin, Nymphadora Tonks, and Harry Potter are here for the Will Reading of Sirius Black,” spoke Remus hoarsely as he approached a secluded goblin stand and an old bearded and wrinkled goblin.

“Ah,” replied the goblin with a scrutinizing stare as he looked over the three humans before resting for a long time on the dark haired green eyed Boy-Who-Lived. “Yes ...Mr. Potter, Director Ragnok has requested a meeting with you before the reading of the Will can commence, ...this way please,” he continued and then hopped off his stool and led the stunned teenager towards two gilded doors at the rear of the bank's elaborate lobby. “Someone will come to collect you and Ms. Tonks soon Mr. Lupin,” the old goblin added with one more glance back at the party the boy had arrived with.

Harry was silently led through the large gold doors to an elaborate hallway with several numbered 'conference rooms' on both sides. After the 'conference rooms', they passed higher up goblin officials' offices and department offices until they came to the end of the hall, and a matching pair of beautiful golden doors. Still following his goblin escort, Harry was led to a small outer office with another old and wrinkled goblin sitting at a small desk and several armed goblin guards in each corner of the room. After a quick exchange in Gobblygook the older hairless goblin got out of his seat and disappeared for a few seconds into a door behind him that Harry had not known existed.

"Director Ragnok will see you now Mr. Potter," spoke the hairless old goblin secretary as he held the door of the boss' office open for the young wizard to enter.

"Thank you," Harry replied sincerely to the goblin secretary as he gathered his nerves and walked normally into the inner office of the Head of the Goblin Nation.

"Ah ...hello Mr. Potter," spoke a large and ancient looking goblin seated in a very elegant gilded high-backed chair behind a large deep mahogany wood desk as he gave a toothless smile to the younger wizard.

"Hello Director Ragnok ...and please call me Harry," he replied politely while returning the ancient goblin's toothless smile out of respect before walking towards him and extending his hand for the now surprised goblin to shake.

"Then it is just Ragnok to you ...Harry," replied the goblin who quickly got over his surprise and shook the young wizard's hand firmly while his smile widened to reveal a long row of razor sharp pointy teeth. "Please have a seat," he continued with a wave in the direction of a comfortable looking wing-backed chair that sat opposite the Goblin Head.

"Thank you Ragnok," replied Harry honestly as he slowly settled himself into his comfortable chair before bringing his gaze up to meet the wise old dark grey eyes of Ragnok.

“Harry,” began Ragnok slowly after the two had stared at each other for several unblinking seconds, “I must say, I have wanted to meet you for a long time now. It is unfortunate to be under such circumstances, and I am truly sorry about Mr. Black. We had only met twice, but he was a noble wizard with a good heart, and I hope you know how much he truly cared for you. If you don’t, you will soon.”

“I don’t understand?” asked the teenager, who paused at the raised hand of Ragnok indicating to him to let him finish his tale, to which he easily complied.

“I first met him shortly after his eleventh birthday, and before he started at Hogwarts. His father, Lord Augustus Black was one of the most ruthless and cunning businessman I have ever known, and I assumed his son would be of the same ilk. But to my surprise, Sirius Black was ...well ...friendly. He didn’t carry the same prejudices as his father like so many pure blooded heirs and children, nor the heartless cunning when his father introduced him to me as is custom with the heirs of the noble families. Our meeting was short, but it left me with a great hope for the Noble Black Family, a hope that was almost destroyed five years later,” Ragnok paused to let Harry’s mind catch up before continuing his story.

“Lord Black came to me the summer after Sirius finished his fifth year with the intent of disowning his oldest son and heir, and transferring that title to his second son, Regulus. He, like so many pure blooded children was an almost carbon copy of his father, and at the time only thirteen, but still as heartless as Lord Black...”

“I invoked an ancient goblin and wizard law that protected the first born Heir of a family from losing out on their birthright until they reached the age of majority, where they could then function as an adult and the current Head of the Family could then rule on their status. At the time, it was all that could be done to protect Sirius, but it did give him two more years under the umbrella protection of the Black Family. Also, as one of the leading contributors to the current uprising known as Voldemort at the time, I felt it in the best interests of my race to do all I could for the young Sirius at the time,” continued Ragnok peacefully.

“Then, not two weeks before Sirius turned seventeen, his parents Lord Augustus and Lady Jillian were killed, most likely on Voldemort’s orders, unaware that he was sealing the fate of the Black Family and ending the relationship with one of his greatest backers. Augustus’ only brother, was much younger and had died four years previously leaving behind his three girls, and therefore Sirius became the Heir of the Black Family, and in order to take control of the Family, was emancipated as an underage Head of a Noble Family. I couldn’t be present at his emancipation and the inheritance transfer, and shortly after he went back to finish Hogwarts and then soon after disappeared into hiding,” continued Ragnok with a content smile as he told the history of the Black Family to someone who would soon understand its importance and significance.

“I saw him again, just over two months ago when he brought his concerns to my attention, hoping for our assistance in the continued preservation of the Black Family. It was at this meeting that we worked out the current plan, and I was more than happy to comply. He asked me at this point to give you this letter,” he added as he pulled a thick letter from the top drawer of his desk and slid it across the surface in front of the speechless Boy-Who-Lived.

“H-He what,” stuttered Harry skeptically as he stared wide eyed at the familiar scrawl of his now deceased godfather?

“I have something to prepare Harry, I will leave you here for a few minutes to read the letter in private before we can continue,” spoke Ragnok with a confirming nod and comfortable smile on his wizened face.

“Okay ...thanks,” replied a shaken Harry as his nervous fingers fumbled with the letter from the beyond as Ragnok left him alone in the quiet office to read.

Prongslet,

Harry, I’m sorry. If you’re reading this now, then I am no longer with you, and for that I am truly sorry. Please remember that I love you and am so proud of the person you have become. Your parents too

loved you and would be proud just the same. Please don't mourn me Harry, no matter how I died, know that you didn't kill me, and if it wasn't for you, I would have given up all those years ago in Azkaban, or been kissed two years ago. You are the thing that brings my life joy, and I would do anything to protect you, or even make your life just a little bit better. You do not deserve the hand fate has dealt you, and yet you have always met it head on, something that fills me with an immense sense of pride and love. Try to remember our few good times, don't dwell on my passing, and know that I have and will love you and be with you for the rest of your days.

I have one favor to ask, something I had been hoping to do since I first saw you being born and the moment you came in to my life. Ragnok and I have come up with a plan to keep the Black Family inheritance out of the hands of my Death Eater cousins and I'll need your help if you would grant me my greatest wish. I have left all necessary items with Ragnok to perform a blood magic ritual where you would become my blood adopted son and therefore the Black Heir. I know this may seem difficult, but please believe that this was my greatest wish and hope in life. I have always seen you as my son Harry, please let this old dog rest knowing that I was able to give you something I have always wanted. I beg you to take control of the Black Family and turn the name into something we can both be proud of. I am not in any way trying to diminish the connection and love you and your parents have for one another, but only wish with all my being that you would also become my son. It would not take anything away from your Potter heritage or birth right, but would give me what I always knew and wanted you to be, my son. I am so proud of the man you have already become, and would like nothing more than to share this one other thing with the person I love.

Padfoot

By the time Harry finished the letter, he was weeping bitterly over the loss of the only parental figure he remembered, but also from the love and warmth he felt radiating off of Sirius' letter and words. Sirius really and truly loved him and considered him his son. That alone was enough to convince the young wizard to grant his last request, and knowing he wouldn't hurt his relationship or connection to his own parents, he felt elated to fulfill it. The cries became softer and less

painful as he quickly re-read the letter, letting the comforting words of Sirius' love and pride fill him with a warmth that permeated and invigorated his whole being, body mind, soul, and magic.

Taking another minute to collect his thoughts and compose himself, Harry wiped at his tear stained cheeks with his robe's silky sleeve. Looking up he noticed that Ragnok quietly sitting across from him with a warm and welcoming smile and an eager look gleaming in his eyes. Taking a few deep breaths and pushing his emotions back into their temporary container, Harry strengthened his Occlumency defenses and his stoic mask of indifference before looking up and searching the eyes of the old goblin before him.

"Are you ready Harry?" asked Ragnok kindly as he stole a glance at the three items he had collected and laid out on the desk between them.

Stealing his own glance at the objects on the desk caught his breath in his throat as he wondered at what exactly this blood adoption ritual truly entailed. Before him was a small glass vile of thick dark red blood, an elaborate runic carved stone bowl, and long bejeweled and similarly runic engraved ceremonial silver dagger. Stealing his resolve to carry through and honor Sirius' plan and wishes, and knowing in his heart that he had to and wanted to do this for the man he considered his true family, he looked the ancient goblin in the eyes resolutely before nodding in acceptance.

"Okay Harry ...I'm going to need ten drops of your blood to go into this sanguis bowl, use the dagger, the wound will heal completely at the rituals completion," spoke Ragnok comfortably and calmly to the nervous wizard.

Harry nodded in understanding before lifting the dagger carefully and pulling back the sleeve of his robe to reveal his pale forearm. Taking a deep stabilizing breath, he pierced the clean skin and held his arm out over the stone carved bowl. In no time, ten drops of his blood was gathered into the sanguis bowl and he removed the dagger and watched in fascination as the wound closed and healed itself within seconds, leaving no scar or visible sign behind.



“Thank you Harry,” replied the Goblin Leader as he pulled the bowl towards him and examined the blood now swirling around the stone bowl curiously. “There is something unusual in your blood, actually two things by the looks of it ...here look.”

He carefully slid the bowl in front of Harry who nervously looked into its shallow pool before letting out an audible gasp. Ragnok was right; there were definitely two separate tendrils, one purplish-black and the other whitish-gold, flowing through his blood. It was both a part of and separate from his own blood, and scared him somewhat as he tried to think of what it might be.

“The whitish-gold tendrils appear to be phoenix tears from what I have seen of them in other potions, but I’ve never seen it quite that pronounced or integrated, and I have no idea what the purplish-black tendrils could be ...perhaps a remnant of Voldemort’s killing curse, but I can’t think why that would affect your blood at that level,” postulated the old goblin with a thoughtful expression on his face as he tried to solve the curious problem before him.

“C-Could it be from ...from the ritual where he used my blood to regain his body ...blood from the enemy, flesh of the servant, bone of the father?” he finished in a mumble, not wanting to think too much of that specific night either.

“No,” replied Ragnok with a slight shudder at hearing just one of the times that this young wizard faced the Dark Lord, “he used your blood, but didn’t give you his or anyone else’s ...no ...this looks more like a poison or toxin of some kind.”

“Oh,” replied Harry in instant understanding, “the Basilisk venom from when I got his tooth in my arm second year.”

“Second year? As in you fought a Basilisk at twelve?” asked the shocked goblin.

“Um ...yeah, In the Chamber of Secrets ...but Fawkes came and saved me by crying into the wound,” added Harry humbly, trying to give up most of the credit as usual for fear of sounding big-headed or boastful like his whale of a cousin Dudley.

“Harry,” started Ragnok with an astounded look on his face, “Basilisk venom is instant death to anyone who even touches it with their skin, let alone gets it into your blood. How you even survived for a second after coming into contact with it is beyond me, let alone surviving long enough to get a high enough concentration of phoenix tears to counteract the deadly venom. Your blood is most likely toxic, much like the venom itself, and if you would allow me, I would love to get a sample and test it for you to be sure.”

“Sure,” replied Harry uneasily, wondering what his blood was truly capable of, and thinking about why it didn’t have a more negative effect on Voldemort during his rebirth.

“Wonderful, let’s continue shall we?”

Ragnok pulled the sanguis bowl back in front of him and placed his long thick fingertips around its edge and began speaking Gobblegook in a very low tone, causing the carved runes to glow a bright yellow almost golden color for a few seconds. When the glow subsided, Ragnok carefully allowed ten drops of Sirius’ blood from the phial and repeated the chanting once again causing the glow to last several seconds. The mixture of the two bloods in the sanguis bowl became one, and swirled excitedly in the shallow depths of the carved stone awaiting the final step of the blood adoption ritual.

“Okay Harry, I need you to repeat the following incantation and then enter the dagger back into your arm and hold it there. You will feel a little burning pain when it is complete, but should not be anything you can’t handle,” continued the goblin with a knowing smirk that Harry immediately understood to mean it would hurt ...a lot. “Now, the incantation is ‘sanguis me familiae’ and must be spoken clearly as you bring the dagger into your arm.”

“Sanguis me familiae,” spoke the green eyed wizard clearly as he used the ornate ceremonial dagger to puncture his clean forearm again.

This time, instead of bleeding out of the new wound, the dagger glowed a brilliant gold except for the still silver runes etched into the central channel of the elaborate ceremonial blade. Harry was in utter

fascination as the mixed blood of he and his godfather slowly rose out of the sanguis bowl in a clean stream and moved towards the glowing ceremonial blade. The blood began collecting in the center channel filling in the silver runes before a flash of red erupted from the runes. When their eyes opened, they found the blood gone, the knife clean, and Harry's wound on his arm was already healing a second later with only a slight itch at the spot on his forearm.

"That wasn't too ba—," started a blinking Harry before an intense burning sensation exploded from his arm and quickly engulfed every square inch of his body, forcing him to grit his teeth in obvious pain to avoid screaming out or showing weakness.

It wasn't actually as bad as the cruciatus curse, but it was no picnic, his veins burned with an uncontrollable fire for several moments until it slowly calmed to a low warmth that left his body and skin with an unusual tingle for another few minutes before subsiding even further to non-existence. It took Harry a few seconds to regain his labored breathing, and settle the tingling sensations that lingered in certain areas, mainly his senses which seemed to be tingling a bit extra.

When he finally opened his eyes after the tingling had completely subsided, and his breathing had returned to normal, he found the room he was in to be quite blurry and out of focus. That however, did not prevent him from knowing everything around him through his heightened senses of smell, hearing, and touch, and he wondered just what had happened to him. His other senses were in such high alert, that his fuzzy vision was almost bothersome, and figured it just temporary.

"The Blood adoption ritual is complete, how do you feel Harry?" asked Ragnok with a concerned look on his ancient face, not that Harry could tell from that, but could hear the concern in his voice and almost sense it in his magic.

"Tired ...and my vision's fuzzy ...and all my other senses seem on high alert," breathed out the teenage wizard in response.

“Hmm, almost dog like you might say,” replied the older goblin with a knowing smirk and amused voice of which Harry could only go by the later of the two, causing his heart to skip a beat.

“W-What do you mean?” he asked excitedly despite the still foggy vision.

“Harry,” started the goblin amusedly, “you inherited the look of all Potter men; the eyes, temperament, and thirst for knowledge of your mother; did you not think you would also inherit some of Sirius’ family traits.”

“A ...ah ...er.”

“It’s quite alright Harry, do not worry,” replied Ragnok warmly to the spluttering teenager. “Sirius, because of his animagus form had wonderful senses of smell, taste, hearing, and touch, and because he was a Black, he had impeccable, practically perfect eyesight like all members of that family. You should try taking your glasses off before you worry about your ‘fuzzy vision’ as you put it,” finished Ragnok with a slight chuckle at the head of his companion snapping up and his unfocused eyes of disbelief could be seen through the thick lenses.

“Really?” asked Harry slowly and nervously, reaching up and removing the glasses he had been forced to rely on his entire life.

His heart was racing, he was beyond hopeful and excited at the idea of having good enough vision to not need glasses anymore. Even with all the success he had been having with Tonks and his metamorph changes, he could never change his need for glasses. He could change the color and shape, and even slightly improve his vision, but he still needed the glasses to read or see any kind of detail. His glasses had always been a great liability, and he was overwhelmed at the prospect that he might not need them anymore, nor would he have to go through the experimental vision correction spell-potion combo he had found in Luna’s mum’s journal.

The glasses removed, Harry slowly and anxiously opened his eyes, hoping for the best. He would not be disappointed, as he found he

could see quite clearly, even better than he ever could with his glasses. The smile that lit up his face at this revelation was practically blinding, and returned somewhat milder by the old goblin.

"I imagine that you are pleased with the results, Mr. Black-Potter?" inquired Ragnok amusedly.

"Yes, very much Ragnok," he replied.

"Unfortunately," began the old goblin, "it is now time for the Will Reading ...could you accompany me to the appointed conference room? I believe everyone should already be there waiting on us."

"Of course," replied Harry as he pocketed his letter from Sirius and his now useless glasses before Ragnok interrupted him.

"Harry, I would be happy to remove the prescription on those glasses, if you wanted to continue wearing them," spoke the goblin with a knowing smirk.

"Why would I do that?"

"Sometimes it is more beneficial to let your opponents underestimate you, and keep a few surprises up your sleeve," answered the wise goblin.

"Brilliant," answered Harry as he handed over his glasses with a knowing smile lighting up his face and watched as Ragnok quickly cleared the lenses to act as plain glass before returning them to his face.

"If you have any questions during the reading of the Will, please don't hesitate to ask. As Sirius' heir, you control the proceedings and I may ask your permission to continue at times," spoke Ragnok as the two walked side by side down the halls and back towards the front of the bank and the conference rooms.

"Thank you Ragnok," spoke Harry honestly as they approached the conference room in question as he gave a small grin and nod of appreciation.

“Don’t mention it Harry,” returned Ragnok sincerely before opening the door to conference room eight and allowing his companion to enter first as the noise level inside the room came to an abrupt halt ...before.

“HARRY?!” shouted several people at once upon recognizing the newcomer.

“Um ...hi,” answered Harry uncertainly as he took in the spacious conference room.

Sitting around a large circular wooden conference table was the entire Weasley family minus Percy, and Hermione and her parents filling one side. The other side had Hagrid, Dumbledore, Minerva, an empty space, and then Draco and Narcissa Malfoy, and a couple who must be Tonks’ parents sitting next to her. There was a space next to Tonks with Remus and Bill Weasley on his left which he started towards after Ragnok walked around to the other side and motioned for him to sit.

Draco was glaring daggers at everyone in the room, showing his true dislike for his current company, while wearing an outrageously expensive deep purple robe that probably cost more than the entire Weasley family made that year combined. His smug look as he glared at the peons beneath him made Harry shake his head in wonder, some people never grow up. Not that Ron wasn’t giving the glare right back at Draco, except for instead of smugness on his face it was just anger, and a little dirt. Suppressing a private chuckle at the two boys who were more similar than either of them would ever admit, Harry nodded at everyone present and took his seat between Remus and Tonks and watched as Ragnok sat at the other end followed by another younger goblin.

“Oh ...hello Griphook,” spoke Harry with a nod to the goblin once he recognized who had sat down next to Ragnok.

“Hello Mr. B--,” replied the surprised young goblin before being interrupted.

“Please, call me Harry,” interjected the green eyed wizard quickly, not wanting to have to reveal that information, hoping the Will would do so for him.

“Of course Harry,” replied Griphook with a knowing smirk before he passed a large sealed scroll to Ragnok.

“We are here on this day, July the fourteenth 1996, for the Reading of the Last Will & Testament of one, Lord Sirius Orion Black,” started Ragnok importantly, and bringing immediate silence into the room as everyone’s attention focused on him. “Shall we begin?” he asked directed towards Harry who gave a slight nod in confirmation as several others in the room nodded and agreed as well, before breaking open the seal on the scroll and beginning to read.

“I, Lord Sirius Orion Black, Head of the Ancient and Noble House of Black, being of sound mind and body, do hereby declare this my Last Will and Testament, canceling all previous. I hereby bequeath the following Black assets thusly:

To Arthur, Molly, Billius, Charles, Frederick, George, Ronald, and Ginerva Weasley; I leave you each twenty thousand galleons in appreciation for the love and support you have all provided for both me, and more importantly, my godson. I would have traded all of the Black vaults to have grown up a member of your family, and I only hope this makes your already full lives that much easier to bear.

To Hermione Jane Granger; I leave you twenty thousand galleons in appreciation for your loyalty and help. I still say you are the smartest witch of your age, and I only hope this money can make attaining knowledge that much easier.

To Minerva Elise McGonagall; I leave you forty thousand galleons, half of which is to be set aside for the Gryffindor Quidditch Team to provide better equipment for the future of our house. Minnie, I respect and trust you more than you could ever know, and despite the problems I know you had with James and I, we both truly care for you and highly value your friendship and unwavering guidance.

To Rubeus Elijah Hagrid; I leave you ten kegs of Ivan's Mulled Mead that has aged for over forty years in my Family House's basement. I also leave you my companion and friend, the Hippogriff now known as Padfoot. I cannot think of a greater games keeper or more caring person to watch over my friend, please take care.

To Albus blah blah blah Dumbledore, sorry couldn't resist; I leave you one hundred thousand galleons for you and the Order, as well as the cases Barrington's Brandy and Solviec's Reserve Label. I also leave the fate of Headquarters in the hands of its new owner, in hopes that your differences and secrets will be discussed.

And now onto family, to my cousin's Narcissa Black Malfoy and Bellatrix Black Lestranger; I leave you exactly what you deserve ...nothing! You have chosen your fates by bowing to that half-blood monster, and I can only hope that one day you will answer for your sins tenfold.

"WHAT! That's an OUTRAGE!" shouted Draco venomously.

"How dare him," hissed Narcissa angrily, but with much more grace than her obnoxious son.

"Sit Down!" snarled Ragnok threateningly as four armed goblin guards rushed from the darkened corners of the room in seconds and had the two hostile Malfoy's surrounded with spears at their throats.

"What is the meaning of this?" squeaked Narcissa in the most dignified voice she could muster at the time.

"You have heard Lord Black's Will pertaining to yourselves, and if you will not sit quietly you will be removed," replied Ragnok harshly, but with amusement clearly evident in his eyes.

"You can't do that!" snapped Narcissa angrily, forgetting her surroundings before being reminded as they grabbed her by the upper arms and began dragging her and her protesting son out of the doors.



“This isn’t over Potter,” sneered Draco as he reached the door still struggling against the grip of the goblin guards before the door closed with a snap.

“Ah ...shall we continue?” smiled Ragnok pleasantly, clearly enjoying the day’s events so far before getting several nods and continuing with the reading.

“To my true cousin Andromeda Black Tonks and her husband Theodore Edward Tonks; I leave you one hundred thousand galleons, and I will welcome you back into the Black Family contingent upon my Heir’s approval. Andie, you were my only friend growing up, and it was your courage that most inspired and drove me to leave my parent’s house and ways of life behind. For that I am forever in your debt, and may your life continue to be so blessed.

To my second cousin Nymphadora Anibelle Tonks, don’t cringe: I leave you one hundred thousand galleons so you never have to work for that incompetent sandbag Fudge again. That idiot stole twelve years of my life; don’t let him do the same to you. You are the little sister I always wanted and am proud of the woman you have become and continue to grow into. Please keep looking after Harry and Remus for me, I love you.

To my best friend and brother Remus John Lupin; I leave you one hundred thousand galleons and the title of honorary godfather to Harry. I also leave you twenty-five percent ownership in Potent Potions & Apothecary at 1217 Knockturn Alley so you will always have access to your necessary potions and ingredients. I feel so horrible to be leaving you alone every month my friend, but know that those were some of the greatest moments of my life, and hopefully a new generation will be able to take up the reigns soon enough. Finally ...I am forever sorry for doubting you all those years ago; I have lived with the guilt of that decision and my influence in it for too long. I was wrong, so very wrong, and I am truly sorry in so many ways. Please take care of our cub and yourself, I love you Moony.

And finally, to my son Harry James Black-Potter; I leave you Heir to the House Black and all its titles and possessions. I also declare you emancipated upon you reaching your sixteenth birthday. I have loved

you your whole life Harry, and never have I loved someone more. You were my reason to live, and I will always be with you. I am sorry for my actions all those years ago, picking Peter, and then rushing after Peter without any thought of what I was doing to you, please forgive me and know that never in my life have I wanted to go back and change everything. To give you your parents, to give you me and the life you deserved to live. I will always love you Harry, and am so proud of you my son."

By the time he finished reading there was hardly a dry eye in the room, and several surprised people at what naming Harry as his son and heir truly meant. Harry who had a pretty good idea what to expect beforehand, was still emotional over the address and apologies Sirius gave to him and Remus, and was trying to keep control as he stared down at the table. A feminine hand finding and squeezing his under the table brought him back to the present and he smiled in appreciation to Tonks for her show of comfort and support.

"Harry? What did Sirius mean? Why did he call you his son or Black-Potter?" asked Hermione breathlessly, the first to recover or lose their tact whichever the case may be.

"Because Ms. Granger," replied Ragnok drawing attention away from the still uncomfortable young wizard. "Harry was blood adopted by Sirius Black, and therefore is his son and heir by blood and magic."

"When did this happen?" asked Albus Dumbledore accusingly, "and why wasn't I informed?"

"Maybe because it's none of your business, sir," answered Harry hoarsely, speaking for the first time in a low throaty calm voice as he cleared his face and mind of emotion. "The Prophecy does not put me under your guardianship or control ...this is my life, and I will do as I see fit, not what you or anyone else thinks is in my best interest. Those decisions are mine, and mine alone."

"Mr. Potter, show Professor Dumbledore some respect," snapped Minerva McGonagall with thin pursed lips and an icy glare directed at her student.

“Minerva,” started Albus tiredly, “Harry is right, it is not my place. I am sorry Harry. I was only worried about how this would affect the Blood Protection Wards at Privet Drive, I am truly sorry, it was not my decision to make, I apologize.”

“Thank you Professor, that means a lot,” started Harry honestly as he thought up his response. “I don’t think it will affect them any more than Voldemort having my blood in his veins, and besides, the wards are pretty much charged last I checked, and the protection was only going to last another year anyway, which it will now anyway, so the risk is not too great.”

“Very well Harry,” replied Albus conciliatorily as he nodded his head and gave the younger wizard a small smile.

“Excuse me,” spoke up Ragnok importantly, once again drawing everyone’s attention. “We have a few things to clear up before we can conclude the proceedings. First, Lord Black-Potter, do you grant Andromeda Black Tonks, her husband Theodore Edward Tonks, and daughter Nymphadora Anibelle Tonks reinstatement into the Black Family?”

“Yes, I do, if that is there desire,” responded Harry despite the wide eyed and hopeful looks of the two Black women on his right.

“Yes, of course,” stuttered a stunned and then elated Andromeda Tonks who smiled widely at the younger wizard as her daughter did much of the same.

“Perfect,” replied Ragnok who slid a few pieces of parchment and self inking quill to the new Blacks to sign. “Come Harry’s sixteenth birthday, and his emancipation, those documents will be signed and sealed by the Family Ring and then put into affect. We can meet anytime come July thirty-first for the official inheritance ceremonies and finalizing your emancipation Harry. For everyone else, Griphook here will disperse all the necessities and arrange for anyone who wants to go and visit their vaults and perhaps make a small withdrawal,” finished Ragnok amusedly as he stood and left the conference room in the capable hands of his younger assistant.

"I have keys for Charles, Ronald, and Ginerva Weasley, Hermione Granger, Remus Lupin, Nymphadora Tonks, and Andromeda Black Tonks," started Griphook loudly after Ragnok had left and the room erupted in talking. "I was told arrangements can be made for Mr. Hagrid to collect the Hippogriff, and for the alcohol to be distributed?"

"It can be," replied Albus Dumbledore after receiving a nod from Harry.

"I can arrange for Mr. Lupin, Ms. Tonks, and Mrs. Tonks to have their personal vault contents added to the new ones, since the old ones were too small," continued Griphook who received nods and thanks of approval. "Also, if anyone wishes to visit their vaults, please come and see me after everyone has got their keys."

"Harry, I was wondering if we could have a few words about headquarters?" asked Dumbledore as several others approached Griphook about their new keys and vaults leaving mostly the adults including Harry, standing around.

"You can continue using it sir, but I'd rather not talk about it until after my birthday ...I'm just not ready for that yet," stated the green eyed wizard resignedly, knowing that he wasn't in the mood to deal with that now.

"Very well Harry," answered Albus, "are you planning on staying at Privet Drive until then?"

"Yes, I was planning on it," responded Harry dryly.

"Harry dear, won't you come and spend your birthday with us at the Burrow?" asked Molly Weasley pleadingly, "we would love to have you."

"Really?" asked Harry excitedly, happy to get the chance to spend some time with the family that he adopted.

"We'd be honored Harry," responded Arthur with a warm smile from next to his wife.

"That sounds like a splendid idea," agreed Albus cheerfully, hoping to help bridge the gap between him and his favorite student that had formed this past year, and also curious as to what exactly Harry had been up to so far this summer especially since he's been able to do magic.

He knew that Harry and Tonks were dueling, and the young auror was mentoring the boy in transfiguration and defense. Aside from that however, he knew very little of what went on day to day, and had just recently heard that Kingsley had also been visiting the boy, apparently to teach physical self-defense. Harry was looking considerably better than just a few weeks ago at the end of term, so maybe the exercise was doing some good. Or maybe it's just that he's finally eating again, and according to Tonks, is quite the chef too. He was snapped from his thoughts as the said young man responded.

"Brilliant," smiled Harry reassuringly.

"Wonderful," answered the Headmaster, "Nymphadora, will you make sure Harry gets home safe?"

"Of course sir," answered the pink haired auror.

"Wonderful," started Dumbledore with a happy smile, "well, I must be off."

"I think we better get moving too, or else we may never find Ron and Ginny," spoke Arthur Weasley kindly as he patted Harry on the shoulder before his wife captured him into a tight embrace.

Yeah Harry," interjected Fred.

"See you later," continued George.

"Old Chap,"

"Old man,"

“Bye Guys, take care,” responded Harry to the Weasley parents and twins who were now making their way towards their two youngest kids who were anxiously waiting to go see their new vaults.

“I’ll see you Sunday, Harry,” spoke Bill Weasley once the rest of his family had gathered around the flooded goblin. “I was hoping to bring Charlie by with me since he’ll only be in town for a few more days.”

“That’s brilliant, I’ll see you both Sunday then,” replied Harry shaking the older wizard’s hand.

“Bye Harry, see you soon,” called Hermione as she and her parents were being led out by a new goblin to their vault.

“Yeah mate, see you soon,” added Ron.

“Bye Harry,” called Ginny too as the Weasley family was being led out of the room by two new goblins, apparently they were splitting up.

“Lord Black-Potter, would you care to join us for lunch?” asked Andromeda Black Tonks somewhat apprehensively after the already exciting start to the day.

“Please call me Harry, I am not too fond of the term Lord,” answered the teenage wizard, “and yes, I would love to accompany you both to lunch.”

“Wonderful,” replied Andromeda, “I do so want to get a chance to talk to you, Nymphadora always speaks quite well of you, and I rarely get to spend much time with my daughter as it is.”

“Shall we go then?” asked Mr. Tonks as the group neared the waiting Griphook near the exit.

“Hi Griphook, did you need me for anything?” asked Harry politely as he neared the first goblin he had met as an eleven year old boy.

“Hello Harry, it is good to see you again,” responded the smaller goblin politely.

“You too Griphook,” smiled back Harry honestly.

“I just wanted to give you this bag,” continued the friendly goblin as he pulled out a black velvet bag with a Gringotts crest stitched on its side. “It is keyed so only you can use it, and is connected to your trust fund vault in case you need any money until we see you on your birthday.”

“Thank you Griphook, I look forward to our next meeting,” responded Harry who then stuck out his hand and shook that of the smaller goblin, further surprising everyone present but himself as they group finally left the conference room and bank.

Lunch with Remus and the Tonks Family in a private room at the Leaky Cauldron was a pleasant and relaxed affair, after Harry had begged to stop quickly and pick up a mail order catalog from Flourish and Blotts. Harry quickly discovered where Tonks got her upbeat personality and overly friendly demeanor. ‘Ted’ Tonks, as he liked to be called, was a riot, was friendly, funny, sarcastic, and an incredible story teller. The long lunch was spent mostly listening to these stories and laughing along with the others, except Nymphadora, who a fair number of the tales were concerning.

Harry immensely enjoyed the lunch and the time spent with the Tonks Family, who were both friendly and easy going, and allowed Harry to relax and feel at ease around them, something he was truly grateful for after the intense morning he had already had. After saying their goodbye’s, and promising to meet again for dinner one night, Harry along with Remus and Tonks left the Leaky Cauldron into muggle London. After a shorter trip on the Day Bus home, the three settled onto the sofa, or the chair in Remus’ case, in Harry’s den, exhausted from the long day already.

“Well Kingsley should be here in a little over an hour, do you want to watch a movie? I don’t really feel like practicing today,” spoke Tonks after a few moments of content peace and quiet.

“Sure, can we watch Goldfinger?” asked Harry excitedly, too tired to practice as well, and wanting to rest before Kingsley showed up for his martial arts lesson.

"You bet," started Tonks, "We'd love for you to join us Remus, I'm sure you'll like James Bond, Harry does."

"That would be great," replied Remus with a knowing look on his face, "I've actually read a lot of the Ian Fleming books from the series, but have never seen any of the movies."

"Brilliant, I'll make popcorn," started Harry who jumped to his feet and quickly headed towards the kitchen, oblivious to the snickers of the werewolf at his behavior.

Tonks was of course right about the movie, it was truly brilliant, and Harry quickly dubbed it his favorite yet. He absolutely adored the Aston Martin, even without all the gadgets, while Remus held an unusual fascination with the character Oddjob and his hat, which apparently had something to do with a Marauder joke gone awry that he promised to tell at a later date. They were just sitting around chatting as the movie ended, when Kingsley arrived with a pop near the den's door.

"Hi Tonks, Harry, Remus," started the tall dark skinned auror at the sight of the three happy and relaxed faces that greeted him. "Are we still practicing today, Harry?"

"You bet," started Harry jumping off the sofa and running towards his room, "just let me get changed first."

"Sure thing," added Kingsley with a chuckle as he turned back to the two still sitting in the den.

"Hey Remus," yelled Harry from his room as he began to emerge dressed in shorts and a tee, "do you want to stay and see what we've been up to? I make a mean dinner afterwards."

"I'd love to Harry, thanks," he replied with a warm smile to his young friend as he got up to follow the group to the training room for Harry's martial arts lesson.



AN: Yeah, done with CHAPTER 8! HA! He's still at Privet Drive, not yet emancipated & can do MAGIC all he wants and hang out all day with a hot woman ...would you have left?

I have been slow typing because I am trying to finish handwriting the story, which is technically the rough draft since I change quite a bit as I type. I'm almost done with chapter 15, and hopefully only will go to 18-20. Sorry for having to wait, but this (the typed version) story is much better than the handwritten rough version I am mostly working on. I end up polishing this typed version much more than the other, and it is better for it despite being tedious.

Thanks to those whose reviews are so encouraging and pleasant, I have been rather pleasantly or unpleasantly surprised, and I expect a few flames this time around, I mean come on! Somebody has to have SOME legitimate beef with my story by now! I can take it; I have a pretty good sense of humor and thick skin. Nothing you say will make me stop writing, so don't "fear the author." I'm just a person with too much time on their hands, and not enough of a life to be doing something else ...like I'd want to do anything else? Seeing as everywhere I go, and everyone I meet I tell them about my Harry Potter stories to gage their reactions and understandings. Surprisingly, people who don't read fan fiction have very narrow understandings of the world of Harry Potter. I mean, it's not that out there for me to consider Harry and Bellatrix romantically involved ...has anyone seen "The Graduate." I'm sorry to keep going, but Helena Bonham Carter was so perfect for that role, it was like a continuation of her role in Fight Club, truly awesome.

Oh well ...until next time, enjoy reading!

## Chapter 9

Harry woke up Sunday morning (July 16th) feeling refreshed and much better than the day before. He had spent most of Saturday talking with Tonks about everything that happened at and before the Will Reading. They talked about what Harry's plans were for the little over two weeks until his birthday, and then for the rest of the summer in general. How he wanted to continue practicing with Tonks because he was learning so much, and just loved to spend any kind of time with the young metamorph, and also continuing with Kingsley as long as he could.

Tonks talked a lot about how much she enjoyed being on leave, and not working constantly. She talked about how being an auror wasn't necessarily what it was cracked up to be, and that was the reason she had joined the Order. She truly wanted to fight against the wrongs of the wizarding world, namely the pureblood prejudices that ran so prevalent, and wasn't getting that from being an auror. She talked about how much fun she had with Harry, whether instructing him in lessons or playing around on the sofa, their time together was what she was most enjoying about the last few weeks.

They had practiced a little, but mainly relaxed and hung out in each others company. Tonks had wondered why he wasn't wearing his glasses that morning, but had waited for his story to find out the truth. She was quite surprised to find out about the old blood adoption ritual, and was real happy with the results. Not even for a minute did she think about or worry about being with a distant cousin, if you could even call Harry that. She could now see his eyes focused and unhindered by thick lenses and was once again amazed at the depth of emotion she saw within them. She was eager to explain the advantages now with his metamorph changes now that he wouldn't need to rely on the big glasses, and the two spent some time going over and strengthening Harry's understanding of the growing metamorph capabilities.

They had watched a movie and snogged on the sofa, and Harry finally understood the beauty of just hanging out with your girlfriend, and the happiness it filled him with. After his lesson with Kingsley, he had spent the many remaining hours of the night strengthening his

Occlumency shields and organizing his mind library. He was more successful than he had imagined being, and was able to better organize and clear his mind by the end of the night. He had also began storing emotions in secured trunks within his mind to have better access and more powerful emotions to draw from at any given notice, and he felt quite confident that just like the positive emotions required for his patronus, other emotions had an equal place in the practice of most magic's.

He knew his Occlumency shields were still no match for Dumbledore or Riddle, but he at least felt relatively confident that he could withstand Snape if he had to, not that he wanted to test that theory. But he hoped that by the beginning of the school year that he would be even further along, and more prepared to deal with any Legilimancy attacks.

Sunday morning was proving to become a wonderful day, as Harry ran around his neighborhood in the dawn's early light. This was just his fourth outdoor run, but he already liked it much more, the fresh and alive early morning air, the lack of people and stares at this time of day, and the beautiful sounds of the early morning birds. By seven in the morning, he was just returning from his ever lengthening run, and continued on his morning workout. After the Tai Chi to relax him and his heartbeat, he continued to the weightlifting and then onto the heavy bag, punching and kicking it until he was too sore and tired to stand.

After dragging himself through his shower, he was sitting on the sofa eating a large omelet and pile of potato wedges thinking about what Tonks was doing today. Sunday's being the only day he didn't see her or make her breakfast, he wondered if she was getting something proper to eat. He was just finishing his breakfast when Hedwig came soaring through the apartment's only real window, the rest being illusions, and landed gracefully before him on the coffee table. After giving her a few escaped pieces of ham, he removed the package from her leg with a slight excitement building inside of him.

"Did you get the book okay, girl?" he asked his beautiful snow white owl as he affectionately stroked her soft feathers and head, receiving an affirmative hoot in reply.

Tapping the package with his wand to return it to its rightful size, he slowly unwrapped the book he bought because of a note in the Flourish & Blotts mail order catalog. Having picked up the catalog on Friday while in Diagon Alley, he did not notice the note inside it until reading through it Saturday evening. He was quite surprised by the note, coming from Jonathan Blotts, part-owner about a book he had come across at a recent estate sale that he wasn't particularly interested in displaying at his store, but thought that if anyone deserved it, Harry did. Completely removing the brown paper wrapping, a large black leather bound tome with ancient yellowing parchment fell out onto his lap. He stared at the sinister looking Family Crest embossed in silver on the book's face, and smaller one on the spine with a little bit of fear and apprehension. Opening the front cover carefully, a small note of thanks from Jonathan fluttering to the floor as his eyes stared at the title on the inside front page; *The History of Parceltongues*, by Lady Cornelia Peverell.

Not knowing what to make of the obviously old tome, and noticing that it was entirely a handwritten original, and probably the only copy in existence even though it was written in English. Instantly wondering how something like this would turn up at an estate sale, Harry was slightly nervous about what the book would actually contain. Flipping to the next page, he discovered a small dedication.

'To my daughter-in-law Ambrosia, to document the history of the Slytherin Parceltongue Family Line. Yours, Cornelia.'

He again began wondering how Voldemort himself did not own this book, but thought that maybe it being in Olde English and not parceltongue itself would explain it. But Tom still would have wanted any information on the greatest of the Hogwarts four, especially if it discussed a trait of the Slytherin Line he himself valued so greatly. Considering that maybe Voldemort never knew of the books existence could also explain how it found Harry instead of Tom.

Not having anything planned until Bill and Charlie showed up around lunchtime, Harry brought the book with him to the sofa and began reading with an excited vigor. After a short introduction where Lady Peverell explained her reasons for documenting the history of

Parceltongues, and why she studied and learned this history to better understand her husband, Lord Sylvester Ignatius Peverell, Heir of Salazar Slytherin, and a Parcelmouth born in 1575 in Marseille, France. She wrote the book, her studies and findings for her daughter-in-law Ambrosia, who was marrying her Parcelmouth son. She wanted her to understand some of the traditions she was marrying into, and to continue to keep the records and history of the noble language of their family.

The first chapter dealt with the ancient understandings and legends surrounding snake-speakers or snake charmers found in Egyptian, Indian, and Mesopotamian societies. The author however, found no evidence that these charmers actually spoke verbally with the snakes, and instead used flutes and other instruments to tame the snake, not speak to or control them like true Parceltongues. She documented people over history that were known to have a certain affinity or bond with snakes as well, the most famous of these, an ancient wizard family from the Dark Ages, the House of Slytherin.

The Slytherin Family was an old and powerful family during the late Dark Ages that controlled what is now the Kiedler Forest and lands of North Umbria. The forest's reputation grew as the largest refuge for serpents of all kinds who flooded the area, making it almost impossible to navigate through. Every Slytherin had a natural affinity or bond with the many serpents that migrated to their safe-haven, but none could speak to them until the four year old son of then Lord Samileel Slytherin was bitten.

The family legend stated that young Salazar, already a friend too many of the area snakes, was approached and bitten by an ancient and mythological black and gold "Pharaoh" snake. The snake was so old; its poison lacked the potency to kill any longer, and died while biting the young heir. Salazar fell into a coma for many months before he awoke a changed boy. His understanding and eventually their language grew inside of him.

Salazar Slytherin, the first True Parcelmouth took up the next two chapters of the History, as the Father of the Serpents. He took the family bond with snakes to new and previously unheard of levels, developing the spoken and written language of parceltongue, and

documenting his studies with the many different snakes and magics he encountered in his life. The life of the Hogwarts Founder, Harry found amazingly detailed, due to the author's husband's translations and teachings of Salazar's original journals which still belonged to the family, and had shared with his wife.

The following three chapters were similar in structure, and dealt with Salazar's immediate descendents who all had access to their ancestor's journals, and even contributed to them. The individual chapters dedicated to Sylvester, then Sabin, and then Salus were all very detailed and informative. Apparently, the Peverell Family had managed to keep all the Parcelmouth journals of Slytherin and his descendents at the time of the books authorship. Harry was beyond fascinated at the idea of reading actual Parcelmouth Journals, but figured they now belonged to Slytherin's Heir, his mortal enemy Lord Voldemort. Harry was not quite halfway through the large leather tome when he heard a knock on his apartment door and realized it was almost lunchtime. He quickly hid the book back in his bedroom, not wanting anyone to see it quite yet, and answered the door.

"Hi Bill, Charlie," spoke Harry happily upon seeing the eldest Weasley boys at his apartment door next to a glaring Aunt Petunia.

"Hey Harry," they replied in an eerie Fred and George like unison, walking into the apartment without a backwards glance at the scowling woman.

"Thanks Aunt Petunia," responded Harry before quickly closing the door and locking it in his Aunt's horse-like face before she had a chance to reply.

"Hey Harry," started Bill with a sneaky smile on his face, "Charlie was wondering if we could have some fun in the training room first. He's actually been trying to beat me in a duel his whole life, and I think he came closest back in second year."

"Hey," snapped Charlie in mock outrage, "not all of us were married to the library, some of us actually went out with women."

“Oh, that was low ...but now that I’m dating and you’re not, what your excuse?” egged on Bill, trying successfully to rile up his younger, stockier brother.

“Maybe I don’t spend my life chasing ancient Egyptian tombs,” started Charlie, “I have a fun job.”

“Curse breaking is fun,” replied Bill.

“Not as fun as Dragons.”

“Is too”

“Is not”

“Too”

“Not”

“Okay guys, I get it,” interrupted Harry finally, thinking that he now knew where the twins came from, and wasn’t sure if his sanity would hold much longer. “How about you settle this by actually dueling?”

“Splendid idea,” responded Bill enthusiastically, “coming ickle Charliekins?”

“You’ll pay for that Jill,” snapped back Charlie good naturedly towards his older brother.

“Yeah yeah ...whatever Charlene,” retorted Bill mockingly as he turned his back on his brother and led the trio to the training room with a wide smile on his handsome face.

Bill ended up humiliating Charlie in two very quick duels without breaking a sweat as he toyed with his more athletic, but much less knowledgeable younger brother and dragon tamer. Harry couldn’t fight his own snickers at the constant baiting of each other throughout the duels, or the hideous hot pink outfit and matching hair that Charlie now sported, his brother having maybe a little too much fun dueling. Charlie took the ribbing and the outfit well, apparently quite used to

loosing to Bill and ending up looking like he just got pranked by the twins. Harry though for a second that he would ask about the hair, as it kind of looked like Tonks' style, but didn't have the nerve to find out.

Hoping to give his ego a little boost, and to get back at the still laughing and red faced Harry, Charlie challenged him to a duel to reclaim his honor. The laughing stopped, but the smile never left Harry's face as he gladly accepted the offer to the somewhat disheartened dragon tamer at his response. Harry had only really been dueling against Tonks, who was an auror and very good, or with Remus twice the other day who as a Defense teacher and werewolf, was quite skilled and very fast. He was eager to test himself against Charlie, someone who didn't probably duel people for a living to gage his own progress.

"Nothing dark, this is a friendly duel," spoke Bill as he saw the two competitors loose their smiles and become more determined as they met to face off.

"I can't wait to tell my friends that I dueled and beat The-Boy-Who-Lived," taunted Charlie, trying to intimidate his younger opponent.

"Ah ...but then you would have to actually beat me," responded Harry with a friendly smirk, "and I don't like loosing."

"We'll see about that Potty," sneered Charlie good naturedly as he bowed to his opponent.

"Whenever you're ready, Chuckie," answered Harry with a bow.

"I still can't believe I lost to a fifteen year old," replied Charlie in disbelief as he dug into the late lunch of ham and cheese sandwiches and crisps with a Ron like vigor.

"Yeah ...three times too," replied Bill with a slight snigger that caused his younger brother to shoot him a threatening glare that did little to quiet him.



"I think it's your turn after lunch, Jill," responded Charlie mockingly, and trying to turn the tables back on his brother, "I'll even put a galleon on Harry here to trounce you."

"Really?" responded a surprised and delighted Bill who watched the two younger wizards carefully. "Well, he did beat you pretty soundly, but I doubt he's got much left in him," he continued with a smirk towards Harry which was mirrored by the green eyed wizard.

"You can tell that he's been practicing with Tonks for a while," replied Charlie with a knowing smirk that Harry couldn't quite figure. "I'm sure he has plenty of stamina by now ...or at least enough to take care of the likes of you," he finished with a wink towards Harry before turning to smirk at his brother and continue trying to rile each other up.

Harry however, did in fact end up losing his duel to Bill, but not until over a half an hour of trading spells, jinxes, and curses with the professional Curse Breaker. Harry had almost won several times, but the older Bill always managed to avoid the finishing blow, and was able to thwart the younger wizards best efforts despite the slow and steady increase he was showing in his power and speed trying to catch him up. Bill hadn't been worked so hard in a duel for months, and was amazed at the teenage wizard before him as he broadened his vast arsenal of more obscure spells trying anything to take Harry down.

It wasn't until Bill conjured an unreal swarm of locusts, seemingly straight from the biblical plagues, to attack and cloud Harry's vision, giving the older curse breaker time to land a very useful transfiguration of Harry's clothes into a one-piece fluffy pink bunny suit. Having just banished most of the locusts, it took Harry a second to realize that his outfit had changed and he had just lost his wand to Bill's summoning of it in his confusion. Having the two wands on him, and looking like a ridiculous version of the Easter Bunny, Harry yielded to the older curse breaker to the uproarious laughter of their lone spectator, Charlie. Bill corrected that with another flick of his wand, and Charlie was now sporting a matching bunny costume causing the two tired duelists to break out in their own cackles.

By the time they had been healed of all their minor cuts and bruises, and their clothing was returned to normal, it was fast approaching four o'clock, and time for Harry's martial arts lesson with Kingsley. Both Bill and Charlie were quite interested in what the Senior Auror and Order member was teaching Harry, and stayed to watch for the first hour before saying their goodbyes and heading home for the Weasley Family Sunday Dinner. Kingsley was in good spirits, having been extracting information from the imprisoned Death Eaters set for trial later in the week, and was eagerly running Harry through the several katas he had shown him, and introduced another more complicated one.

By the time of their lesson's end, Harry was bruised and sore all over his tired and sweaty body, and wondered if he would physically be able to do much else tonight. Kingsley took a pass at dinner, leaving just after the lesson to go back to work, so Harry took his time taking a long steaming hot shower to relax the stiffness settling over his bones and muscles. He then fixed a large meal of pasta and meat sauce in no time, and returned to the den's sofa to finish his meal.

Soon afterwards, he was picking back up his copy of *The History of Parceltongues*, and picking up where he had left off that morning. The seventh chapter, dedicated to Salus Slytherin marked the first major shift in the Slytherin and therefore Parceltongue lineage. Salus, only had daughters, and of the six only one survived to adulthood, she married and also had only one daughter who survived to adulthood. That woman, Salus' grand-daughter known to the author only as Edith, married a strong and wealthy French Pureblood named, Ignatius Peverell. Although she herself couldn't speak the noble snake language, she did successfully manage to pass it along with her family's collection of Parceltongue Journals to her only son, Julian Peverell, the great-great grandfather of the author's husband.

Those next four chapters detailed the Peverell Parceltongue Line, starting with Julian (b. 1380), then his son Constans, then Percival, then Caleb, the author's Father-In-Law. Each chapter was very detailed with biographical information on each of the ancient parcel mouths, as well as their many accomplishments in life and in the noble language of the serpent. He found it all fascinating and very helpful as he learned about the language's history and it's evolution

through the ages, and all contained within the Slytherin Family Blood Line.

When he got to the chapter on the author's husband, Harry was floored with the amount of information and the detailed account of Sylvester Ignatius Peverell's life and parsel tongue journey, all of which he recounted to his wife. She explained the Slytherin and Peverell Family Parseltongue Journals, how many there were, written by whom, and what they focused on in a couple of words. Harry was determined to try and get his hands on at least one of these journals, they just sounded too amazing and unique, and especially Sabin Slytherin and Kaleb Peverell, who apparently did a lot with parsel tongue spell creation and manipulation, something he felt would be helpful in countering the Slytherin Line's final heir, Lord Voldemort.

Even if the Dark Lord had already read and studied every Parseltongue Journal created, Harry still knew that he would need to learn some of what they contained if he was ever to succeed or maybe even survive against one of the most feared wizards in modern history. He was interested, having never really thought of parsel tongue as a written language per se, but only a means to talk with snakes, and was curious to know any parsel tongue magic that the journals might contain, and have a more complete understanding of what his enemy may be capable of. He continued reading about the long and full life of the author's husband Sylvester, and a small introduction to her young son as he grew and reached adulthood, Salazar Kaleb Peverell. The small section on her son, also concluded the work of the original author, Lady Cornelia Peverell, but was taken up by the book's first recipient, her daughter-in-law, Ambrosia Grennen Peverell.

Ambrosia wrote one long essay at the age of eighty, slightly different from the chapters of her mother-in-law, in that she filled hers with both the historical and biographical record of her husband and his parsel tongue talents and advancements as well as countless pages of research in the many different snake species. She analyzed the different breeds, their habitats, toxicity or poison levels, life spans, loyalties, intelligences, traits and skills of countless known and unknown breeds of serpents. It was an intense scholarly study into

the lives of Parceltongue's companions, and Harry found himself amazed at all the very rare and different breeds and species, as well as the tables and charts that compared them to one another.

Ambrosia also wrote a rather lengthy introduction to her son, Diabolus Kaleb Peverell and his growth towards adulthood. She had immense praise for her now adult son at the time of her writing, who she claimed would far out pass his father in the evolution and growth of Parcel Magic and the language of the serpents. Already, at the age of thirty five, his renown as a scholar was becoming legendary in their French community, and his study of Parcel Magic was already reaching beyond his ancestor's capabilities, allowing him to enter uncharted territory in relation to the ancient noble language.

Unfortunately, Diabolus married very late in life, at the age of seventy five, having been the last remaining Peverell for over thirty years since his parents passed on within ten years of his mother's chapter. He married almost out of necessity, to preserve the family line, and married a young witch who quickly bore him three children, a son and two daughters. Adeodatus Peverell died at the age of ten during the customary Snake Bonding Ritual that every male Peverell had undergone since Julian Peverell first accomplished the task in 1390. Diabolus' two daughters both survived and married, however only the oldest, Sabinia was able to have children.

Sabinia Peverell Gaunt was the author who completed the account of her father, Diabolus after his much younger wife died giving birth to her younger sister Alethea. Sabinia grew up only knowing her father, and idolized everything about the much older man, including his fascination with family history and the parceltongue lineage. Although she herself had little understanding of any of the noble language of the serpents, she practically devoured the History of Parceltongues book of her female ancestors growing up until she was able to help and understand her father. Her chapters were written as a eulogy to her father five years after his death, while she was fast approaching the age of sixty, and her family began to fall on harder times. Trying to keep the traditions of her ancestors alive, after her father's death, she spent the time between researching and writing her contribution to the History, so that it would not be lost.

Her husband, Theodore Edward Gaunt, was an old English pureblood with a fierce temper and poor fiscal management, who squandered most of his wife's Peverell Family wealth within the years immediately following Diabolus' death. Over the next twenty years, the hard times for the Gaunt Family only worsened, until Sabinia was forced to sell off the ancient Parceltongue Journals of her Slytherin and Peverell ancestors to the highest bidders. According to her chapter, she sold all the Slytherin Family Journals, ten belonging to Salazar, two from Sylvester, four from Sabin, and one from Salus to the very wealthy Borgin Family, who only wanted them because of their connection to the greatest of the Hogwarts' Founders. The Peverell Journals however, brought much less interest, and were sold cheaply between three large and ancient families of England. Six journals of Julian Peverell, two from Constans, and two from Percival were sold to the Malfoy Family; while the Zabini Family bought six from Sylvester Peverell and four from Salazar Peverell. The six journals of Kaleb, and then the ten of her father Diabolus were sold to the Black Family, and were the last ones Sabinia held on to, not wanting to sell off her dad's and his favorite ancestor's works until she had to.

Harry almost fainted when he read the names of the four families that bought up the Parceltongue Journals, and wondered briefly if the Black Family ones were still located in the Family vault or Grimmauld Place itself. He wondered why the Malfoy's and Zabini's would want to buy Parceltongue journals during the muggle French Revolution, but assumed it was probably more of a status symbol at the time, or a way to connect with their Hogwarts' House's Founder. The easier to believe, was the Slytherin Journals that sold to the Borgin Family, probably the very same that still runs the store in Knockturn Alley known as Borgin & Burke's.

He was amazed to discover the hard times Sabinia and her family had fallen upon, and felt sympathy towards the woman who had tried to hold her Family Heritage and Legacy together as long as she could, before it slipped through her hands. She only retained three Family possessions to pass on to her only son; History of Parceltongues, minus the Parceltongue Journals, the Peverell Family Ring, and the Slytherin Family Lockett. The History however, ended with Sabinia's chapter on her father Diabolus, and the small introduction to her son

Marcellus Theodore Gaunt, the last speaker of the Slytherin Parceltongue Line to be recorded at Sabinia's conclusion in 1801.

Realizing the lateness of the hour as he finished the large and ancient tome, Harry cleared and organized his mind for several long moments until he decided to get ready for bed. He was anxious to see Tonks tomorrow, and ask about taking trips to Grimmauld Place and maybe even Borgin & Burke's to start looking for the Parceltongue Journals. He realized just how much he missed seeing Tonks on Sunday's, it being the only days they didn't spend together, and Harry was already dreading the next one, knowing how much he enjoyed spending his days with her. It didn't take long for the exhaustion of the day to send Harry into a deep and very comfortable, three hour occluded sleep.

The next three days flew by too quickly, with Harry continuously pushing himself in everything he did, all hours of the day. His runs, in the short time he had been outside, had grown to previously unthought-of levels in both distance and speed, while his weight lifting was helping; he had cut back on it in favor of more Tai Chi and Martial Arts training. Harry figured he was better built for speed and endurance than bulk or strength anyway, and did not get too discouraged that his muscles weren't necessarily bulging, despite the fact he was filling out enough to no longer be considered emaciated. Although eating well and working out, even endurance, will strengthen his body considerably.

Returning from his run Thursday morning, July 20th, the day of the Death Eater Trials, Harry found Hedwig, Pidgwidgeon, and a very obnoxiously colored vulture-like bird all waiting on the new perch Harry had transfigured that sat by the den's only viable window opening. Eyeing the weird bird cautiously, Harry saw the letter clutched in its talons, and instantly recognized the loopy handwriting of Luna Lovegood. Removing the letter, and asking the unusual bird to please wait for his reply, since he didn't know how far away his friend was, and he needed Hedwig for other local deliveries and pick ups this coming week.

Harry,

Thank you so much for your kind words, you are the best, and I treasure your friendship as well. I am so glad that you read my mum's journal; please hang on to it until I see you on the Hogwarts Express. You are the only person I have ever trusted with something so valuable of mine or my mum's, and mainly because I know that of all people, you can understand its importance to me.

My Dad and I are having such great times, tracking the Crumple Horned Snorkack, and haven't been in the same place for more than a day or night, it is so much fun. My Dad was happy that I had someone to write to over the summer, and is such a big fan of yours, was overjoyed that I had become your friend. We were told by the Ministry that I wouldn't need to testify in the upcoming case because of my age and that there were already other witnesses, so we are sticking with our vacation; I wish you the best of luck nailing those arseholes.

On a separate note, one of my Dad's contacts claimed he saw a small group of Death Eaters around our house in Ottery St. Catchpole last week, so you may want to warn the Weasleys and be careful. I know your birthday is coming up, and it would be a perfect opportunity for that snake faced Tom to do something, so please be careful. And don't go all guilty hero on us and push us away again, we all choose to stand by your side against Voldemort and his Death Eaters, we will always be targets regardless of our association with you, that is what is right. Take care Harry, and I'll see you on the Express.

Love,

Luna

Harry wore a soft smile as he read his friend's letter, and all her kind words and support. He paused slightly at her warning, but quickly pushed that aside reading about his own tendencies to push them away, and their arguments for remaining exactly where they were. He really enjoyed how Luna could just tell him something straight out, and was finding himself looking forward to her letters more and more. Composing his thoughts for a few minutes, he got out a fresh piece of parchment and his quill to pen a reply.

Luna,

Thank you again. I have rarely felt as excited as when I get your letters and words of wisdom. Know that I will treasure your mum's journal as if it was my own, and will keep it safe. It was so helpful in understanding what was going on in the various rooms we encountered at the Department of Mysteries, and forced me to examine that night much more closely. My Occlumency has been doing real well as I said before, and has helped me deal with my emotions and their attachments to my memories. It has also been so helpful with my reading and studying, by having a more organized mind, everything becomes clearer. I love it ...I just wish I learned it earlier.

Tell your Dad, that when you're back in town that I'd love to sit down and talk with him about possibly doing some articles in The Quibler. I could also give another juicy interview if you're looking to fill up pages. After today's trial, I think the papers will have plenty to print for a while. Don't worry, I'll give them hell. Thank you both so much for your support, and know that I remain in your debt.

Harry, AKA Stubby Boardman's Godson

Harry folded and sealed the letter, giving it back to the very unusual vulture-like bird that greedily grabbed it and immediately took off out the window without even a backward glance. Pig, after depositing her letters had already fallen asleep on the perch next to a very disgruntled Hedwig who had returned with his new books from Flourish & Blotts. Putting the letters from Ron and Ginny aside so that he could get ready for the day's Trials at the Ministry, and skipping his morning weight lifting and Tai Chi exercises, he headed for a long hot shower in preparation for the day ahead of him.

Harry enjoyed a large breakfast with both Tonks and Kingsley, his guards for the trip, after dressing in the same dress robes from the Will Reading, and looking quite sharp. Once they had all finished eating, the trio portkeyed directly into the MLE Director's office to avoid the crowded Ministry Atrium as per Madam Bones' suggestion. Being given a pass previously acquired by Madam Bones herself,



stating he was a Ministry witness, the now group of four slowly made their way down to courtroom ten at the very bottom level of the British Ministry of Magic.

The second Harry entered Courtroom Ten, his nervousness returned, but he kept it in check behind his blank emotionless mask as he allowed himself to take in the courtroom again. He easily remembered his own trial from last year, and the two he witnessed in Dumbledore's pensieve, and a similarly uneasy feeling settled somewhere in his stomach. He followed Tonks and Kingsley to the small section of seating used for witnesses, and did his best to ignore the rush of whispers that erupted at the entrance of the Boy Who Lived.

"Hey Harry," exclaimed Hermione as she engulfed her best friend in a tight hug after seeing him in the witness section she was being led to by Albus Dumbledore, and accompanied by the many red headed Weasleys.

"Hi 'Mione," choked out Harry with difficulty at the lack of air, "hey mate," he added over his bushy haired friend's shoulder when he spotted his tall and lanky other best friend.

"Wow Harry," started Ron in surprise after his friends finished with the hug and he could shake his best mate's hand, realizing he wasn't looking as far down as he thought he would at him, "you got tall this summer."

"I had to grow sometime. I mean we can't all be towering bean poles," smirked back Harry, who elicited giggles from the gathered audience waiting for their turn to greet the young wizard.

"Hi Harry," squealed Ginny who nudged her much taller brother out of the way impatiently before launching herself towards Harry, capturing him in his second breathtaking embrace within the minute.

"Hey Gin," gasped Harry after being released by the petite girl's hug, causing her to blush slightly at the looks and snickers of her friends and family.

“Hi Mr. and Mrs. Weasley,” spoke Harry once he regained his bearings before being engulfed in a true Weasley hug from the family’s matron.

“Hello Harry dear ...it’s so good to see you looking so healthy,” whispered Mrs. Weasley caringly into the young wizard’s shoulder as she finished her warm hug.

“Thanks,” responded Harry happily before shaking Mr. Weasley’s hand and turning to the last member of the group. “It’s good to see you too, sir.”

“Likewise Harry ...and it’s wonderful to see you doing so well,” spoke Albus Dumbledore warmly towards his favorite student who had been true to his word and was giving the old man a fair chance to redeem himself, a chance he would not miss. “I need to go to my seat, but I would love to chat with you after the proceedings Harry?”

“Okay Headmaster.”

## Section Break

“We have now seen the memories of the night in question, June the 12th from Kingsley Shacklebolt, Auror First Class, and Hogwarts students Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Neville Longbottom, and Hermione Granger,” spoke Madam Amelia Bones importantly as she glanced around the very full Wizengamot. “Now, Mr. Price does the defense wish to question any of the witnesses?”

“Yes Madam Bones, the defense calls upon Mr. Harry Potter,” stated the elderly grey haired Malfoy Family solicitor, who was representing the entire group of detained Death Eaters, “...and we request he be given veritaserum.”

“Absolutely not,” snapped Albus Dumbledore forcefully from his spot among the Wizengamot elite, “he is underage, and it is therefore illegal to do so.”

“Very well,” grumbled an angry dark grey eyed, but resigned older solicitor who had to at least try. “Mr. Potter, is it true that you successfully cast an unforgivable curse on the night of June 12th?”

“No,” replied Harry calmly, suppressing his nervousness and fear behind his practiced mask of indifference, further infuriating the tall and menacing looking Adolph Price.

“You lie,” he replied hoping to goad the young wizard. “I have a witness who saw you perform the cruciatus curse on another human being.”

“Really?” questioned Harry innocently, “then call them to the stand.”

“They were not willing to testify for fear of persecution, but their claim is valid,” replied the agitated solicitor.

“Unless you can provide the proof you speak of, their claim is actually not valid,” retorted Harry equally calm. “Anyone can claim falsities, but actual proof is usually required in a court of law.”

“Then I demand your wand be examined,” snapped Mr. Price.

“Examine away,” responded Harry, handing his wand to the approaching Auror Dawlish easily, who performed several prior incantatem spells revealing nothing more than school charms and spells before handing the holly wand back to its owner completely satisfied.

“Mr. Potter, what is your relationship with Draco Malfoy?” asked the sleazy solicitor angrily as he decided to move on to his next line of questioning, knowing that to help his clients he would have to discredit the Boy Who Lived somehow.

“He is a fellow classmate at Hogwarts,” replied Harry nonchalantly.

“You hate him, he is your sworn enemy, is that not correct Mr. Potter?” sneered Mr. Price menacingly while trying to intimidate the younger wizard and antagonize him into making a mistake he could exploit.

"No," replied Harry easily. "Voldemort ... (gasps) ...is my sworn enemy, but yes I do hate all those who bow to that cruel half-blood hypocrite. Yes, that does include both male Malfoys as well as each of the other ten Death Eaters on trial here today."

"See, Mr. Potter's hatred of these innocent men clouds his judgment; he is not fit to act as a witness because of his prejudices towards my clients. He said himself that he hates all eleven men on trial, if that's not enough to discredit his testimony, I don't know what is?" finished Mr. Price pompously as he looked smugly around the cavernous courtroom.

"Our mutual hatred of one another hardly affects my judgment or my testimony, Mr. Price," started Harry over the slight murmurs that began to grow throughout the room. "The events speak for themselves, the eleven men before me all gave their lives to Voldemort (gasps) and for that they have chosen their fate. They chose what was easy, instead of what was right. There is ample evidence not just from me that shows your clients guilty of both being Death Eaters, and performing multiple unforgivable and dark curses on children no less on the night in question. Do they deny those facts?" he finished with a satisfied smirk on his face directed at the eleven bound and silenced Death Eaters standing trial, and their livid solicitor.

"You aren't asking the questions here Potter," snapped Price.

"Well, you didn't seem to be either, Mr. Price. Perhaps your entire defense strategy is to discredit me or shift the focus from your clients, who are in fact guilty beyond any doubt," stated Harry forcefully as he returned the angry glare to the irate solicitor.

"I'm done with you," snapped Mr. Price angrily after a quick look around to find most members of the Wizengamot showing their support of the Boy Who Lived.

Section Break

“Now that we have finished with all the prosecutions witnesses, we will begin the questioning of the accused,” started Madam Bones imperially, stopping the growing murmurs of voices throughout the courtroom after the entire defense cross examination was complete. “Are there any questions before we begin?”

“Yes Madam,” asked Harry as he stood from his seat drawing every eye in the room onto him. “Is it possible for me to ask Mr. Malfoy four questions to clarify certain concerns I have?”

“Absolutely NOT,” shouted solicitor Price heatedly as he jumped from his seat, “he is not a member of the Wizengamot.”

“Hmm,” contemplated Madam Bones thoughtfully, “as a witness and victim in this case, I will allow Mr. Potter his four questions when we have finished with Mr. Malfoy. Auror Dawlish, please administer the veritaserum to Mr. Lucius Malfoy.”

“What is your full name?” asked Madam Bones who was really controlling the trials well, after the glossy eyed look took affect on Lucius indicating him being under the truth serum.

“Lucius Abraxas Malfoy,” he replied plainly, and without his customary pureblood arrogance that was so inherent in his speech, once the Auror remembered to remove his silencing charm on the Malfoy Head.

“Are you a Death Eater or follower of You-Know-Who?”

“Yes.”

“When did you join?”

“On my sixteenth birthday.”

“How many people have you personally killed?”

“Over a hundred, but most were just muggle filth.”

Gasps and shrieks could be heard throughout the large courtroom at the aristocratic wizard's declaration, shocked that someone so influential within the Ministry could have hidden their involvement for so long. Almost every Wizengamot member had heard enough, most thinking that Lucius was maybe just a financier, not an actual killer for He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. Madam Bones decided to skip her last few inconsequential questions for the DMLE interrogations, now that she had the Malfoy Head dead to rights, and turned to the young green eyed wizard, one of the few who were not shocked by the elder Malfoy's confession.

"Mr. Potter, you may ask your four questions now," spoke Madam Bones over the outraged cries of the Wizengamot, instantly causing them to quiet.

"Thank you Madam Bones," replied Harry evenly, before turning to face the long silver-blond haired pureblood bigot. "Was Sirius Black ever a Death Eater or supporter of Voldemort?"

"No."

"Who betrayed the Potters to Voldemort, and framed Sirius Black?"

"Peter Pettigrew."

"Is Peter Pettigrew still a living member of the Death Eaters?"

"Yes."

"Are all of your unsavory and illegal items still located in a secret room below your drawing room floor?"

"Yes."

"Thank you Mr. Malfoy," replied a happy Harry above the shocked silent crowd of Wizengamot members, "and thank you Madam Bones for allowing my questions."

"Thank you Mr. Potter, those were excellent questions for this Wizengamot to consider at a later date," replied Madam Bones

equally happy, knowing she had Malfoy nailed and remembering the young wizard's defense of his late godfather earlier this summer in her office. "Let us continue, Mr. Gregory Nott..."

## Section Break

"Would you like to join me for lunch Harry?" asked Albus Dumbledore warmly as he approached the younger wizard shortly after Madam Bones called a lunch break, having finished all the questioning of the witnesses and accused and wanting time before they deliberated.

"Thank you sir, I'd really like that," responded Harry easily, despite the groans and frowns from the several Weasleys that had gathered around the Boy Who Lived hoping for his company.

"You are all welcome to join us, of course," added Dumbledore with twinkling blue eyes as he surveyed the faces of Tonks, Remus, Hermione, and the four Weasleys who all nodded eagerly in anticipation. "How about we go to the Leaky Cauldron, maybe then William, Fred, and George might like to join us?"

"That sounds wonderful," exclaimed a very elated Molly Weasley from next to her smiling husband, glad to have as much of her family around her as she could get.

"I'll go fetch the boys," added Arthur to the group as he gave his wife a small hug before leading the group towards the courtroom's exit and the Ministry's Floo.

Lunch turned out to be a loud and raucous affair once the Weasley twins showed up with their dad and oldest brother Bill. Everyone enjoyed a very happy and filling meal in the large private dining room they occupied at the Leaky Cauldron. Hermione went on endlessly about their OWL results, which were expected any day, while Ron just ignored her rant in favor of eating his way through three large helpings of the delicious roast that Tom the barkeep had recommended as today's special.

Harry sat between Tonks and Ginny, with his two best friends across from him, enjoying the meal and finally managing to relax sufficiently

after all the tense moments in the courtroom. He was very careful not to get too close to Tonks, not wanting to get caught or get the young auror in trouble, but still managed to bump legs often enough under the table to make him happy and even more relaxed. He stayed quiet throughout most of the meal, listening to what had been going on at the Burrow, where Hermione and her parents were now staying since they cut their family vacation short to attend the Will Reading last week and the trials today.

Dumbledore asked Harry if he would like to visit the Burrow in the next couple of days, and then after his Birthday when he took control of Grimmauld Place, if he would be willing to move in their. He explained the need to reset the house's wards and security charms once he took control, and Harry reluctantly agreed to help the Order. He himself wasn't really looking forward to being in that house again, but knew he had to overcome his fear in order to help.

For the first time he could remember, Harry almost didn't want to leave Privet Drive this summer. While he was somewhat excited to see and hang out with his friends, he was severely going to miss his space, all of his workout equipment, and all the time he had both to himself and with Tonks. He had spent over a month there uninterrupted, working out, studying, and practicing magic, and he loved the progress he had made working at his own pace. He feared that a change in scenery and location would also change the structure of his training, both physical and magical. Would he still get to go on his morning runs, would he even have a place to practice, or the peace and quiet needed to study and push him into getting better and stronger.

He didn't really want to ever go back to Grimmauld Place, it was just too dark and depressing, and now had too many difficult memories attached to it. He knew however, that it was the perfect headquarters for the Order of the Phoenix, and a great safe house when properly warded and charmed, but it wasn't where he would ever want to live, or even spend the last month of his summer. The whole house was filthy, and had been neglected for years by the misuse and poor help from the disturbed house-elf of the Black Family, Kreacher. Maybe with some actual help, they could try getting the large Brownstone into a more functional and habitable living environment. He did not



want to spend his days cleaning the old house, but would contribute a little if necessary, but was actually already thinking of asking if Dobby would be able to help get it fixed and cleaned up.

“Um ...professor?” asked Harry hesitantly as he came out of his self induced internal reverie, “is it possible to hire Dobby to help actually clean headquarters, since he is technically a free elf?”

“Harry my boy, that is a splendid idea,” responded the twinkling old Headmaster. “I will make the arrangements.”

“Thank you sir,” replied Harry easily as the group finished their lunch and made their way back to the Ministry of Magic, and courtroom ten to hear the final arguments, and then the judgment and sentencing.

## Section Break

“I would like to thank the members of the Wizengamot for their time, as well as the witnesses and solicitors. We in the Wizengamot believe this to be an important first step in the road to correcting the errors of our world. This is a great day for the Wizarding World to seek justice from those who have terrorized it for so long, and send the message that we stand against this kind of abhorrent violence,” began Madam Bones importantly, as she stood before the full Wizengamot and the gathered crowd from her spot at the top most benches.

“Mr.’s Rudolphus Lestrange, Rabastan Lestrange, Moses Mulciber, Augustus Rookwood, Antonin Dolohov, and Alexander Jugson ...you have all been previously tried and sentenced to life terms in Azkaban prison, and for your continued crimes you will be sentenced to the Dementor’s Kiss, to be administered at the conclusion of this trial,” continued Amelia Bones forcefully, to the shocked speechless crowd, and the sporadic crying coming from certain members of the community.

“Mr.’s Lucius Malfoy, Vincent Crabbe, Mathias Avery, and Thomas Nott, you have all faced this court for the second time, and you are hereby found guilty of all charges against you. For your repeated crimes, you are each sentenced to life terms in Azkaban, and

stripped of all titles and distinctions. Mr. Walden McNair, you too have been found guilty of being a Death Eater, consorting with You-Know-Who, casting various dark curses, and betraying your oath to the Ministry and magical world. Your service in this Ministry, and this being your first trial for any reason, we have given you a reduced sentence to ten years in Azkaban, and are hereby banished from ever returning to England,” ended Madam Bones with a great sense of finality. “Take the prisoners away, where their sentences will be carried out ...This concluded this session of the Wizengamot on this, the Twentieth of July, 1996.”

“Do you think you’ve won, scarhead?” sneered the livid voice of his school nemesis, Draco Malfoy as Harry and his friends had gathered around the courtroom waiting for it to finish clearing off after the trials.

“What do you want, ferret?” retorted back Harry snappishly.

“Just to tell you your time is up,” retorted the angry blonde ferociously. “The Dark Lord is going to kill you.”

“Still?” answered Harry sarcastically, “I would have though he’d give up by now. Who’s he going to use as Death Eaters, you and your friends?”

“Mark my words Potter, you’ll pay for this in blood,” spat Draco venomously as his anger and rage only grew with every word traded with the Boy-Who-Lived.

“Perhaps your blood Malfoy,” retorted Harry forcefully with a step towards the blonde and a smirk on his face that confused the arrogant blonde, who wasn’t expecting such a grown up and forceful Harry and took a subconscious step back from the intense gaze of the green eyed wizard.

“I’d watch your back scarhead,” he added as a final shot before turning to stalk away with as much dignity as he could.

“Why Draco, is that the only direction you cowards attack from?” answered Harry calling out to the flush faced blonde as he stormed out of the courtroom with all the arrogance of the Malfoy Family, and

as the next Head of that family, with great similarity to his now imprisoned father.

“I’d watch out this year Harry,” started a worried Hermione whose eyes hadn’t left the trailing away Draco, “he seems a little different than before.”

“Don’t worry Hermione,” answered her green eyed friend happily and with a smile in her direction. “I’ve already got the best of friends to watch my back at school.”

“Thanks Harry,” she responded with a matching smile.

“Yeah mate,” added Ron with a hefty slap on the back, “we’ve got your back.”

“Thanks guys, I’ll see you both soon, okay?” responded Harry when everyone had finally left the courtroom, and the elder Weasleys and Dumbledore joined the group and slowly herded them towards the Ministry Floo network to travel home, leaving Harry and Tonks to make their own way back.

“So, is there anything you need to do today before your lesson?” asked Tonks happily once everyone had left, and the two were making their way back to Madam Bones’ office for the return port-key trip back to Privet Drive.

“I only have a half hour,” answered Harry with a smile, “just enough time for something fun.”

“Are we going home then?” asked Tonks with a matching predatory smile.

“Yeah, let’s go,” added Harry as he grabbed her hand and then picked up the port-key, transporting the pair back to Privet Drive.

The pair used what little time they had until Kingsley arrived snogging each other senseless on the sofa, and only just managed to break apart before the happy Auror Captain arrived. He was so excited about the success at the trials, and finally feeling like they (the Aurors

and Ministry) were making a difference that he missed the slightly disheveled and guilty looks of his two younger friends as he was eager to practice some with his new sparring partner. Harry however, had skipped his morning workout and normal all day training routine in order to attend the trials, and found him with much more energy during his Martial Arts lesson than he ever had, and it showed. His movements were faster and cleaner than ever, and he was a much better match for the far stronger and bigger wizard this time around.

"Damn Harry, that's three in a row you've won," started Kingsley with a mixture of shock and pride on his bruised face as he looked up from his back to see a broad smile on the younger wizard's maturing face. "How are you picking this up so fast?"

"I'm not really sure Shack," started Harry as he lent a hand to help the older auror back to his feet, "I've always had good balance and quick reflexes, and I think the Occlumency has been helping me learn the techniques quicker."

"Quicker, Harry it's only been ten days?" responded a disbelieving Kingsley, "I was still trying to perfect the basic katas after a month; you blew through those in the first two days."

"Were you practicing Occlumency when you learned?" asked Harry curiously.

"No Harry," responded Kingsley with a small chuckle, "I started Martial Arts at the age of eight."

"Oh ...you were eight? Did you already know if you were a wizard?" he asked, trying to better understand why he may be improving so fast.

"Yes, I was told by my mum when I was six, she was a witch. My dad was a South African muggle in the Queen's Army, and thought that the discipline of Martial Arts would help my inner focus and concentration and make me a better wizard," replied Kingsley fondly, "...he was right of course."

“Does your dad know Martial Arts too?” asked Harry now that Kingsley seemed okay about sharing some more personal information, and eager to learn about anyone’s parents and the relationships they shared growing up.

“Yeah, a little, but his is more hand-to-hand combat oriented ...you know, because of his army training,” responded Kingsley.

“Was he your teacher?” asked Harry.

“No, Sensei Leung was my teacher for almost ten years, until my auror training became too involved to give me the time for Martial Arts. “Sensei Leung! That’s it. I’ll see if he still has his dojo, maybe he could continue your lessons. I’ve pretty much shown you everything I remember, now you just need more experience and training, and at this rate I won’t be much help with you getting so good so quickly.”

“Thanks,” started Harry shyly, “but you’re still the one who showed me everything ...I mean I’m just a lazy Gryffindor, right?”

“Thanks Harry, you’re alright ...for a lazy Gryffindor that is,” joked back the older auror happily.

“Bloody Ravenclaws,” muttered Harry lowly under his breath, but not quite soft enough to escape Tonks’ approaching ears.

“Do you have something to say about Ravenclaws again?” she asked with a sneer on her face and raised eyebrows that spelled trouble for Harry the last time he insulted the two Ravenclaw aurors.

“No! I would never insult a noble Ravenclaw again,” responded Harry with wide eyes as he looked from the approaching Tonks to the amused, but still quite intimidating looking Kingsley. “Oh shite.”

“Would the mighty Lion like another mane of hair?” asked Tonks threateningly, getting a look of panic on Harry’s face and one of outright laughter on Kingsley’s.

“No ...please, knowledgeable and wise Ravenclaws. Please spare this lowly insignificant inferior being of Gryffindor, he acted rashly like

all Gryffindors would, without the intellect of Hogwarts' best house, the House of the Raven," finished Harry dramatically and with little hope that his buttering up would help him here.

"Oh ...the rash, yet lazy Gryffindor is learning," teased Tonks with a playful smile on her lips. "Now make us knowledgeable and wise Ravenclaws dinner, little lion," she finished as her and Kingsley both burst out laughing at the dumbfound expression that came over Harry's face.

Dinner with the two former Ravenclaws and now aurors was always a fun affair, and filled with more of the same sarcastic banter back and forth. Harry had a hard time defending his house against the two pronged onslaught, but found it fascinating to learn of the other house's attitudes towards who they called the bullies, Snakes and Lions. To them, and probably Hufflepuffs as well, everything always seemed to center around and cater to the Gryffindors and Slytherins, and often times they felt looked over and neglected because of their house affiliation and reputation. All too soon however, it was time for them to leave, bidding Harry a good night, they apparated back to auror headquarters before returning to their respective homes. Harry quickly cleaned the kitchen and went to his desk where the books he ordered from Flourish & Blotts, were still wrapped in their packaging, and the unopened letters from Ron and Ginny lying with them.

Hey Mate,

How are the muggles treating you? Bill says that Tonks really did a great job setting up your room, and bragged about your defeat of Charlie. You'll have to tell me more about it.

Mum says that Dumbledore is going to let you out of there soon, so we should get to see each other in the next week or so anyway. I don't think we'll get to talk much at the trials tomorrow, or will they be today when you get this? Either way, I need to talk to you about something important, and soon. See you soon mate.

Ron

Harry,

Hi, I hope you're doing as well as Bill says. I was just writing to wish you luck at the trials and ask for your help dealing with my idiot of a brother. He's spent the last few weeks moping about, and talking about nothing but Hermione, and then she shows up last week ...and he completely ignores her. It's SO obvious he likes her it's down right disgusting. And apparently, the feelings go both ways, Hermione has been beside herself with worry about Ron ignoring her being a sign that he doesn't truly like her.

The whole thing is driving me crazy ...how did you put up with the two of them all these years? They're impossible. Just promise you'll help ...I need help. Take care Harry, and hopefully we'll see you soon.

Ginny

Harry couldn't stop laughing after reading the two letters from the youngest Weasley children, Ron and Hermione still bickering and acting like fools around each other. He knew at the Yule Ball in fourth year that his two best friends both liked each other a lot more than they even knew themselves, and apparently their maturity in the situation hasn't grown much since that first real argument between them. They already acted like an old married couple, always pushing each others buttons just to get reactions, neither of them acted like that towards him, and he knew it had something to do with their feelings for one another and their lack of ability to express them ...it was painfully obvious to everyone but them.

Wanting to think on his replies a bit, Harry set them aside and opened the wrapped books from Flourish & Blotts. NEWT Charms and NEWT Transfiguration, where two books that he wanted to make sure he got a good start on, knowing that he would get into both classes and knowing he needed to improve both of the fundamental disciplines if he ever wanted to be on par with Voldemort or Dumbledore. After watching their duel that night, he had a new found respect for the advanced Transfiguration and Charms magic that the two older wizard's wielded, and knew that to get to that level eventually, these were two classes he was going to have to concentrate more on in the future.

“Not so lazy a Gryffindor anymore,” he said to nobody but himself as he picked up the two textbooks and his ever growing notebook and returned to the den’s sofa where he settled down for a long night of reading and studying.

AN: Chapter 9! I’m sorry, mea culpa. I have no excuse other than I too am lazy, just not a Gryffindor. On a better note, this story is almost finished being hand written, so I’ll have more time to cranking out these chapters. ENJOY!

Special Thanks to all those who review, and those who have this story on alert. It is truly enjoyable to get the feedback and show of support. Keep it up.



## Chapter 10

Updated: 3/11/08

Harry awoke Friday morning, the day after the Death Eater trials, sore and restless, having fallen asleep the previous night on the sofa with his NEWT Charms Book open on his lap. The book now laid upside-down on the floor after Harry's restless sleep. He had forgotten to organize and clear his mind before falling asleep, and had suffered through the worst sleep he had had in a week. Ever since the horrible night before the reading of Sirius' Will where he had forgotten his nighttime Occlumency, Harry had been extra careful not to repeat it.

Tiredly pulling himself from the sofa, his balance was unsteady and legs wobbly from the difficult night. While he didn't have any visions of Voldemort, he had a pretty good idea what had happened last night. Harry's body ached like he had been held under the cruciatus curse, and he knew that Voldemort had been pretty pissed off at learning the fate of many of his inner circle of Death Eaters, enough to torture three lowly servants to death in his rage.

Harry slowly regained his composure before stripping off his wrinkled and sweaty clothes from yesterday, and grabbing a pair of running shorts, socks, and his shoes. His run through Little Winging started slow as Harry allowed the cool pre-dawn air to soothe and relax him as he built up to a better pace. By the time the sun rose near 6:20am, Harry was in an almost full-on spring which he maintained for the eight kilometers or so to wear his body out, bringing him collapsing on the front lawn of number four Privet Drive just after seven.

Harry dragged himself upstairs to his apartment's training room, where he ran through his Tai Chi routine that relaxed his breathing and focus. He then just did some push-ups, too tired for anything more strenuous, and practically crawled into a long steaming hot shower. He used the time under the water to organize and clear his mind from yesterday and particularly last night before leaving the shower to get dressed for the day.

"Harry, hurry up slow poke, I'm starving out here," shouted the unmistakable voice of his breakfast companion Tonks.

"I'm coming, I'm coming..." he hollered through the bedroom door.

Breakfast was a rushed affair because apparently Tonks had plans for the pair that included another day of shopping, only this time in Diagon Alley. They wanted to get there early because they wanted to avoid crowds or suspicious people and they had a lot of shopping to do if Harry was going to be leaving Privet Drive soon. He needed a new trunk, robes, and books, and Tonks wanted to get Harry his birthday present early and in private, not that it was sexual by any means, rather expensive and secret.

As they finished cleaning up after breakfast, Harry thought about what else he might want to buy for himself, but also a gift for Neville's (30th) and Ginny's (Aug 7th) upcoming birthdays, as well as a thank you gift for Luna and Tonks. Grabbing a set of robes to wear in Diagon Alley so he wouldn't stick out, Harry and Tonks walked down to Mrs. Figg's house so they could use the floo. After a quick hello to a still tired Mrs. Figg, Tonks asked Harry to change his appearance slightly when the older squib had left them alone, making him look older and plainer, with bushy light brown hair that easily concealed his lightening bolt scar and normal brown eyes unhidden by glasses.

Harry and Tonks arrived through the Floo Network at the Leaky Cauldron by just after nine in the morning, to be met by an almost empty bar. After a quick nod to the confused barkeep Tom, the disguised pair headed straight for the entryway into Diagon Alley to begin their shopping. They decided to start at the Trunk Shop, which they could use to store anything else they ended up getting.

Harry was once again amazed and appalled at the lack of activity in the usually bustling alley. He hadn't been paying much attention when he went to Gringotts the week before as he was too wrapped up in the events of that day. But today he could clearly see the damage that the return of Voldemort had caused, the fear in the wizarding world, and the total lack of activity in the usually prosperous shopping district.

They arrived at Alexander's Trunk Shop, where Harry's first trunk was purchased, and the only real trunk store, to find themselves the only

customers in the early hour. The large shop was filled with a great many different styles of trunks, from the basic school trunks, to multi-compartment ones of varying sizes, even several types of sorcerer's trunks, like Mad Eye Moody's. They looked around for a few minutes until Alexander, a very large balding, but red bearded wizard came up from the back room to help them.

"What can I help you folks with?" he asked kindly, excited to finally have a potential customer that didn't just want the standard Hogwarts Trunk.

"I guess I'm curious about your 'Sorcerer's Trunks', you seem to have several different models," replied Harry flatly as he continued to glance around him at what was on display.

"Oh, very nice," began the now very excited store clerk, who immediately went into explanation mode. "We do have Sorcerer's Trunks, with anywhere from three to nine compartments, which can be connected and expanded to a max size of about three square meters. We can convert the individual compartments to restrooms, studies, small bedrooms, closets, libraries, or even kitchens, and like I said they can be connected from the inside."

"Alright, I guess I want a five compartment Sorcerer's Trunk, two closets, one for clothes, one for junk, two libraries, and the last room leave empty," responded Harry easily, causing the store proprietor's smile to widen considerably.

"Do you want the standard key entry, or for a ten galleon upgrade we can do a keyless, magical signature entry disk that will control all five compartments?" asked Alexander happily.

"I'll take the keyless entry, as long as other people can be added to it or removed," answered Harry thoughtfully for a moment.

"Sounds good," replied Alexander, "we also have a twenty galleon basic protection package; charms to prevent damage, fire-proofing, spell-proofing, and a stationary locking charm so nobody can move it without your authorization."

“Ok, I’ll take it all,” replied Harry happily.

“Just pick one of these base styles, and I can have your trunk for you in one hour, for lets say four hundred galleons,” spoke Alexander after a moments thought of adding up everything the customer needed, and was lowering the price considerably because he needed this sale, and had no other work to do until more customers showed up which was unlikely.

“If I can pay when I pick it up, you’ve got yourself a deal,” answered Harry, knowing he would have to run by Gringotts for that kind of money, and the rest of his shopping.

“Deal, I’ll get to work immediately,” responded Alexander, “so which one will it be?”

“The black one with silver fastenings will be perfect,” replied Harry after a moments thought, before shaking the larger wizards hand and exiting the still dreadfully empty shop with Tonks quietly by his side... for the moment.

“Hey, let’s go to the clock shop now, and then Gringotts so we can be back within the hour. Our other stops will probably take a bit longer than we have now,” spoke Tonks with a large mischievous smile as she grabbed the arm of her middle-aged looking companion with his plain brown hair and eyes.

“Sure thing, Dora,” responded her companion with a cheeky smile on his handsome face.

“Watch it mister,” sneered Tonks threateningly, but with a tiny hint of a smile trying to break through her menacing glare.

“Alright, alright...I’m sorry, now, let’s get a move on,” replied Harry happily, enjoying his time spent with Tonks more than he ever thought possible, regardless of how the two of them looked at any given moment.

Even as a middle-aged light curly brown haired and plain brown-eyed woman, Tonks was still beautiful and young at heart and in spirit. The

disguised pair made quick work of the antique clock shop, purchasing a family clock similar to that of the Weasley's, and an antique wrist watch to replace Harry's broken one. Then they moved on to Gringotts, where after a long cart ride to Harry's usual vault, he continued to fill his money bag for several minutes, making sure he had plenty for the trunk and the other purchases he still needed to make. He was amazed at how much he stuffed into the seemingly bottomless and practically weightless money bag he had used since he first found it in this vault as an eleven year old. They then went on to Tonks's new vault, where she found a similar style money bag that she too proceeded to fill, never having the luxury of that much money in her life, and wanting to splurge a little.

They emerged from Gringotts heavily weighed down from the small fortunes that they were both carrying, and headed back in the direction of Alexander's Trunk Shop still with several minutes to spare. Tonks dragged Harry into an Odds & Ends secondhand store two doors down from Alexander's to look for gifts for his friends. They spend ten minutes looking around and rummaging through the much cluttered secondhand shop filled with the most random magical items, until Harry saw two things that really sparked his interest.

Harry carried a small leather pack, that was advertised as a 'Scholars Pack' which could hold up to fifty books at once, and a long cylindrical bag containing a one bedroom wizard's tent that was advertised as being used once during the Quidditch World Cup up to the counter where Tonks was looking intently through jewelry cases. Joining his plain looking companion at the jewelry cases, Harry instantly spotted an unusual pair of earrings that sparkled of their own accord. Two identical miniaturized galaxies that hung from thin silver chains looked to be the perfect thank you gift for his unusual friend Luna, and he asked the lone store clerk to see them.

"These are perfect for Luna," mumbled Harry with wide eyes as he closely examined the miniature galaxy earrings he knew Luna would just love, "how much?"

"I can make you a deal if you're planning on buying that one bedroom wizard's tent and the Scholars Pack too," replied the thin and balding man with a toothy smile on his lined face.

“How much for all three?” asked Harry skeptically, not really knowing how much these tents really cost, but curious nonetheless.

“I’ll do it all for seventy galleons,” he replied with an easy smile on his older worn features that betrayed his excitement.

“Throw in that charm bracelet there, and you have yourself a deal,” replied Harry, who had noticed Tonks checking out the thin silver charm bracelet when he approached the counter.

“Excellent,” he replied happily. “You have yourself a deal”

“Thanks,” finished Harry as he counted out and handed over seventy galleons easily, hardly even making a dent in his still full money bag.

“Here you are sir,” finished the clerk as he handed Harry his packages in a plain lightweight brown bag with a large toothy smile on his face as he collected his galleons and bid his only two customers of the day farewell.

Harry and Tonks continued down to Alexander’s Trunk Shop where they found the large red-bearded proprietor waiting patiently behind his store’s counter. He quickly keyed both Harry and Tonks to the trunk and gave them a quick tour of the five rooms or compartments, where Harry dropped off his earlier purchases before returning to the shop with a large smile on his older looking face.

“Here’s a manual on the trunk’s features,” spoke Alexander as he handed over the small booklet once he was back behind the counter.

“Great,” replied Harry as he counted out the four hundred galleons carefully before shrinking his new trunk, shaking Alexander’s hand and leaving the still empty Trunk Shop.

It was half past ten, when Harry and Tonks entered Madam Malkin’s Robes for All Occasions, and Harry was forced to follow his girlfriend around, gathering different types of robes for him to try on shortly. They spent almost two full hours picking out Harry’s new wardrobe, trying it on, and selecting quite a bit. By the end, he had three new

school robes, three new pairs of dress robes that were very expensive and nice looking, and almost ten casual, or everyday, robes in a variety of colors and styles. He had even picked out a new heavier cloak and a pair of dragon-hide boots to accompany his many other purchases.

Tonks had a great time getting Harry to try on some of the more outrageous fashions more likely worn by the Weasley twins, and was found laughing at her younger companion often, while continuing to pick out more clothes for him to model for her. By the time they paid for Harry's new clothes and left Madam Malkin's it was already lunch time, and the alley was finally starting to fill up with sparse crowds. They made their way back to the Leaky Cauldron for a quick lunch, where thanks to their disguises were able to enjoy it peacefully, before they had the energy to finish their day's shopping.

"So is that charm bracelet for one of your other girlfriends too?" asked Tonks teasingly, as they finished up their sandwiches and left the Leaky Cauldron heading towards their next stops.

"What?" choked out Harry unsurely as he stared open mouthed at the mock glaring Tonks.

"Well, you got something for Hermione and Luna, and I know you still want to get Ginny an owl," huffed Tonks slowly, "...so I'll ask again ...which girlfriend gets that charm bracelet?"

"My only girlfriend," replied Harry, who stopped suddenly and grabbed Tonks' arm lightly, spinning her to face him before he planted a deep lingering kiss on her soft lips with all the passion he could while they were located in the middle of Diagon Alley..

"You'll get the bracelet when we get home, Dora," he finished to Tonks' excited squeal and still glazed over dreamy eyes, surprised that he wasn't hexed for using a nickname that he didn't think she would normally tolerate.

"So, I'm your girlfriend now?" asked Tonks with a still large happy smile on her face as she stared back intensely at the younger wizard, "when were you going to tell me?"

"I...uh...I thought..." stuttered Harry.

"I thought you were supposed to take girlfriends on dates?" she asked mock-threateningly, but still with a smile on her disguised pretty face.

"You want to go out on a date?" asked Harry in shock, but with a goofy grin on his own older looking face.

"Of course I want to go out on a date, you big lump," stated Tonks exasperatedly. "How else will I get to see you in those leather pants I got you, which you won't wear for me?"

"Oh... so now the truth comes out, you just want to show off your man candy," replied Harry with a happy smile, still not quite believing what was happening.

"You got it mister," teased Tonks threateningly as she grabbed his hand and began dragging him to their next stop with a happy bounce in her step.

The trip to 'Owlops Owl Emporium' went very quick, spotting a reddish-brown owl that would be perfect for Ginny. After paying for him, he left instructions on when to deliver it, and included a short birthday message that explained the gift. They then headed for 'Quality Quidditch Supplies' to look for something for Ron.

Harry decided to get his best mate a new set of keeper gloves so he wouldn't feel left out of the gift giving before he spotted the rack of new and used brooms. Apparently, the Firebolt was still top of the line, costing a ridiculous 500 galleons, while brand new Cleansweeps started at fifty, and the new Nimbus 2001s started at one hundred. Deciding to get a new broom, so he wouldn't damage one of the only gifts he had received from Sirius, Harry looked over the brooms carefully for several minutes as Tonks was busy doing something at the counter.



“Thinking about a new broom, eh?” croaked an older tanned wizard that Harry knew to be the shop’s owner from his many times visiting the store.

“Yeah, I guess I’m looking at the Nimbus, although I’m not really a big fan of the 2001 model,” replied Harry.

“Well, if you’re looking for a good deal, I got one Nimbus 2000 in the back that’s still in the box... I’ll sell it cheap” he added kindly.

“Deal, I loved my old Nimbus 2000,” responded Harry happily as he followed the owner to the counter and waited for him to grab the broom as he counted out his galleons.

“So, the only thing left is books, right?” asked Tonks once they made their way past the small crowd starting to gather around the small Quidditch shop.

“Yup, that’s it,” replied Harry happily as he looked around at the growing crowds with an increasing sense of nervousness.

“Good, cause I have one stop for us first,” supplied Tonks with a mischievous and knowing smile on her now plain face.

“What? Where?” asked Harry skeptically.

“It’s a surprise, Harry,” replied Tonks sweetly, “or should I say a present.”

“Tonks, you don’t have to get me anything,” answered Harry stubbornly, but with a hidden smile as he thought about what Tonks had in mind.

“I know, but I want to get you these,” Tonks replied, “besides, you’ll love them.”

“Love what?” asked Harry questioningly.

“Here we are,” stated Tonks, who squeezed Harry’s hand and quickly dragged him into the small almost hidden store, named ‘Wizard Optics’.

“Tonks, I don’t need glasses anymore,” replied Harry confusedly.

“I know that, but everyone else still thinks you do,” answered Tonks to the still befuddled teenager, “...and these aren’t ordinary glasses Harry.”

“They’re not?” he asked in slight shock and confusion, wondering what on earth was going on.

“Nope,” replied Tonks smugly. “Just pick out a pair of frames you like and I’ll take care of the rest,” she finished to the skeptical younger wizard.

“Okay” shrugged Harry who took no time to find to find a neat pair of metal wire-rimmed wrap around glasses that he really liked, and showed them to the happily bouncing Tonks.

“Great, let’s go to the counter,” replied Tonks happily as she led her boyfriend deeper into the small specialized shop.

“What can I do for you” spoke a strict young witch probably in her thirties with long straight black hair and dark brown eyes which stared piercingly at her two customers.

“Yes, I need the Deluxe Aurors Charm Package, as well as your best translation charms put into these frames,” replied Tonks professionally as she stared back at the dark-eyed woman with a faint grin.

“Do you have your Auror Identification?” the rigid woman asked sharply.

“Yes, I do,” replied Tonks as she handed over a small auror badge that the clerk tapped with her wand causing it to glow blue for a quick second.

“Very well, everything seems to be in order,” replied the clerk as she took the clear lens frames and began a long series of complicated wand movements while mumbling under her breath the seemingly difficult incantations.

“That will be seventy galleons, Auror Tonks,” replied the formal woman as she finished minutes later and handed the now heavily charmed glasses back to the female auror, who smiled happily before counting out the seventy galleons and leading a stunned Harry out of the small shop.

“Tonks, what is the Deluxe Auror Charm Package?” asked Harry as they continued their walk to the last stop of the day ‘Flourish & Blotts’.

“Um... let’s see, anti-summoning, unbreakable, spell-resistant, aura reading, and slight visual enhancements, I think,” stated Tonks flatly to the now stunned open-mouthed Harry, causing the slightly older auror to break down into hysterical giggles at his pathetically lost look.

“Oh...” whispered Harry unknowingly as he tried to wake out of his shock-induced stupor.

“Relax Harry, they’re perfect. Everyone expects you to have to wear glasses... and these will be so helpful, they have the same vision spells that are on Mad-Eye’s magical eye,” replied Tonks excitedly as she stared hard at the confused younger wizard.

“Thanks Tonks,” responded Harry gratefully as he gave his girlfriend a wide smile that reached his eyes causing them to flicker green for a few seconds and warmed her heart.

“You’re welcome Harry,” replied Tonks, somewhat shyly and embarrassedly as the intensity of his eyes and words caused her chest to thump loudly and her face to flush ever so slightly. “At least now you can wear these and nobody will know any different that you can see without them... not to mention how useful aura reading is once you’ve learned what to look for.”

“Thanks again Tonks, I love them,” he responded as he leaned down and captured his girlfriend’s soft lips in a deep and sensual kiss that left them both breathing heavily.

“Come on loverboy ...let’s go get you some books,” whispered Tonks softly after the silence following their passionate kiss where they just stood staring longingly into each others morphed eyes.

They ended up having to rush out of Flourish & Blotts at a quarter to four with over fifty shrunken books in Harry’s new trunk to hurry back to the floo to Mrs. Figg’s house. They both had to jog back to Privet Drive just in time to meet Kingsley for Harry’s martial arts lesson. The practice went well, and again re-affirmed the need for better instruction as Harry was able to thwart off the older auror’s attacks almost at will. His speed and reactions were unmatched, and Kingsley only survived as well as he did by his more extensive knowledge and a slight edge in experience, a gap which was quickly closing.

“It’s a good thing I got in touch with Sensei Leung,” started Kingsley as he slowly pulled himself up from where he had been thrown on the floor... again. “I don’t know how many more beatings my body can take.”

“Is it your old body or your inflated ego that can’t take much more?” asked Tonks jokingly from her seat off near the back wall of the training room near the exercise equipment.

“I’d like to see how you do out here Tonks,” scowled Kingsley half-heartedly.

“Okay, okay, point taken,” replied Tonks with a loud laugh.

“We’ll see who’s laughing tomorrow at your first lesson, Harry,” added Kingsley when he noticed the slight chuckling of his young opponent.

“So, we’re going to your sensei’s class tomorrow?” asked Harry instantly becoming slightly nervous at the prospect of being tested in front of a larger and probably more skilled audience.

“Yep, his advanced Jujitsu class is from 4 to 6pm every night,” replied Kingsley with a knowing smile that made Harry’s nervousness increase ten-fold..

“Advanced Jujitsu?” asked Harry apprehensively.

“You got it,” responded Kingsley with a smug smile and a very mischievous gleam in his dark brown eyes, which caused Harry to audibly gulp nervously increasing the auror’s smile.

After their lesson ended, the trio enjoyed a large and filling dinner, Tonks and Kingsley left for the day leaving Harry free to do whatever he wished for the next several hours. He first decided to learn more about his new Sorcerer’s Trunk and then he began to explore and set it up. The project took two solid hours for Harry to learn all the workings of the trunk’s compartments and move all his belongings into their new locations, almost filling the clothing closet with all of his new magical and muggle clothes.

The second compartment was relatively sparse for now, and Harry put all his random stuff like his broom, gifts, candy, and other personal stuff there. He set the third compartment up with his cauldron and all his other potions ingredients and equipment. He then filled the fourth compartment with all of his old text books, muggle books, and others that he already read, leaving his new unread books out at his desk in his apartment’s den. He then spent another hour setting up the one bedroom Wizard’s Tent inside the empty fifth compartment of his Sorcerer’s Trunk.

The tent turned out to be a lot bigger that he originally thought, both on the outside but especially on the inside. The outside of the tent just fit within the empty fifth compartment with the only entranceway near the trunks stairs and the door to the other compartments of the trunk. The inside was enormous, but empty of any furniture except the fully set up magical kitchen. It had one bathroom with all the necessities, and a small bedroom with an even smaller closet. The best part was the very large and open main room that was easily ten times the size of the trunk’s largest available compartment, making Harry very excited that his random idea had worked out so well.

He left his now organized trunk and tent just after ten at night and headed to his apartment's den and his desk, with all the new and unread books he now owned. He decided to start with *The Beginner's Guide to Apparition*, a title that Tonks picked out and thought would be very useful when Harry will be emancipated and become an adult next week allowing him to take the required licensing exam. The book was very easy and within the hour, Harry had devoured the introductory text, and quickly moved on to the more advanced *Master Apparition & Related Techniques*, a book dedicated to everything apparition, from quieter travel to coordinate travel, to side along apparition and anti-apparition spells and words.

Shortly after one am, Harry finished the second larger and more advanced text, and was excited to try to apparate himself and felt confident after reading about the various techniques that he could succeed. However, he decided to wait until Tonks was here, so if he did encounter any problems he would not be alone without help. He grabbed his NEWT Charms, sixth year textbook and his every growing notebook, and brought it with him to bed, where he picked up on his reading and studying of the upcoming year's class.

He remembered to practice his Occlumency before finally going to sleep deep into the night, and it took no time to clear his mind and organize his thoughts for the day. He woke pre-dawn on Saturday happy and refreshed after another peaceful dreamless sleep thanks to the strengthened Occlumency defenses. His morning run and workout flew by, and in no time he was enjoying a comfortable breakfast with a very excited Tonks, who was eagerly looking forward to and happily talking about that night's date.

Harry told Tonks about studying apparition, and being ready to give it a try under her supervision of course, and the two made their way to the training room for the early part of the day. Tonks made sure that Harry had read both books on apparition and knew a good bit about the theory and practice before she was comfortable letting him give it a try. Harry had been thinking on it all morning and humored Tonks' questions, eager to have a go.

It took Harry a few minutes to gather his magic towards himself and then tried to literally push your body and magic with your will towards

your desired destination. A small tingling sensation gathered within his body, letting him know that something was happening. After another few minutes, the tingling sensation grew slightly, until Harry tried pushing his body and magic towards his pictured destination on the other side of the training room.

"You're using too much magic, Harry. You don't have to push outwards so hard, just let it happen naturally. You should feel the tingling in your body before a squeezing feeling, don't push it, just will it or want it, have a better more detailed destination in mind and just let it happen," encouraged Tonks quietly as she watched him and felt him struggle with the real hard part of magical travel.

-CRACK-

"Oh, Harry, you did it! That was great!" shouted Tonks excitedly now from the opposite side of the training room from a now smiling Harry.

"Now, remember how it felt, and come back here."

-CRACK-

"Like that," beamed Harry happily as he apparated right in front of Tonks' face and stole a quick kiss before she could even recover from her shock at him performing it again so much quicker and quieter than his first attempt only moments prior.

"Yeah," breathed Tonks dreamily as she stared into the uncovered intensely burning green eyes of her younger boyfriend, who had not yet tried on the glasses, leaving his normal eyes beautiful and alive, driving her a little bit crazy.

"It was much easier the second time, I didn't have to push at all, I just did it," replied Harry overjoyed as he continued to stare passionately at his girlfriends true and natural form.

"Well, what are you staring at me for ...keep working on it," started Tonks teasingly, but enjoying his gaze and closeness just the same. "If you really read the advanced book, you shouldn't have any problems working on cutting down your apparition noise and timing.

Once you've got a good handle on that, we'll practice following and reading apparition signatures and maybe even side-along apparition which is difficult for most witches and wizards. We can't work on coordinate apparating for now but we will before the tests."

"Cool, sounds good," responded Harry with a smile before...pop, and he disappeared from before his girlfriend.

For the next hour, Harry continued apparating all over the training room, each time becoming easier, quicker and most importantly, quieter. He then started going all around the apartment, learning to read and follow Tonks' apparition signature and then even working on side-along apparition which Tonks could only do once to demonstrate. Harry however had no problems, dual apparition the both of them all over his apartment before he started to tire and get hungry. Tonks talked about coordinate apparating and when they might get some practice, needing to have set coordinates so you don't just appear in some muggle shopping mall, She praised Harry for understanding and advancing so far so fast in apparition, since he was already as quiet as she was, and even more capable in dual-apparating.

After lunch, the pair dueled for over an hour using apparition almost exclusively to get around, something they planned to increase Harry's proficiency and confidence in the art of apparition. By half past three in the afternoon, the pair was joined by Kingsley, who they were not telling about Harry illegally learning to apparate, and the trio departed on their port key to Sussex. They arrived in a dark side alley, and were led by Kingsley to Sensei Leung's Dojo, a short walk away, to find a large and very eastern-style mat covered room with sparse but simple decorations on the walls.

A few people were scattered around the room, doing various stretches and other exercises, while a lone figure slowly walked around the room examining his students. Sensei Lueung was a very short and thin man, but appeared in excellent shape and had a grace and ease to his body movements that Harry had never seen. After spotting the three newcomers, he approached them easily. Kingsley introduced Harry as the new prospective student after a quick acknowledgement to his sensei, and Master Leung took several long



seconds gazing intently and practically sizing the young green-eyed boy up as other students began arriving.

“Kingsley here says that you are a natural fighter, and an exceptionally quick learner. He also says that he has nothing else to teach you, do you agree?” asked Sensei Leung, never taking his slightly narrow and intense eyes off the youngest member of the newcomers.

“I learn something new every fight, every day, but it has been getting easier everyday as well. Kingsley has been an exceptional teacher so far, but I need to be pushed harder to improve and diversify my training more,” responded Harry as he held the shorter man’s gaze for several seconds trying to convey his message and his own conviction and purpose.

“Very well spoken, Harry,” responded Sensei Leung thoughtfully, “if you pass my tests, you will be admitted to my advanced class.”

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“Okay, this will be the last one,” started Sensei Leung as he watched his new prospective student slowly pull himself from the floor after loosing his third straight fight to one of the other students, this one to Jonathan’s spinning round house kicks to the chest and head.

“Karen and Michael get to pick young Harry’s final opponent, winner’s rights.”

“How about Stephen, Sensei?” responded Michael quickly which received a nod from

Karen, causing a very thickly muscled middle-aged man to stand up from the room’s edge and make his way to the center of the dojo.

“Are you ready Harry....Stephen... okay, let’s begin,” continued Sensei Leung as the two fighters faced off and bowed in respect before the fight began.

For the next ten minutes, Harry did everything he could think of outside of using magic to avoid getting beaten by the class's oldest and probably strongest student. Stephen's hits hurt like hell, and not for the first time that day, Harry thought his arm was broken blocking a kick. He was also every bit as skilled as the last three fighters Harry faced, but lacked the speed and maneuverability shared by the others, allowing the less skilled but younger fighter to avoid bigger blows despite remaining on the defensive throughout the fight. Finally, Harry got caught high on the shoulder with a strong side kick that caused him to stumble backwards while Stephen pressed his first real exploitable advantage.

Stephen's lunge towards the stumbling fighter however was met with an Aikido arm grab and throw that flipped the older heavier man. He landed flat on his back from the momentum in the throw, and after a quick hit to the chest, he lay on his back defeated by the younger yet amazingly fast and creative fighter.

"Excellent job, both of you, that was a truly great battle between the two of you," started Sensei Leung appreciatively to the whole class. "Experience and strength are not always advantageous as you can see Harry's unorthodox style made it difficult for any of you to finally hit him, let alone beat him. Harry, those were truly remarkable on the fly tactics against each opponent you faced, I see Kingsley was not exaggerating when he mentioned your unorthodox yet uncanny resourcefulness."

"Thank you, Sensei," responded Harry shyly, unaccustomed to receiving that kind of praise in front of others and not really believing that he did that well, he had lost three fights before managing to defeat Stephen on a lucky last second move.

"Wonderful, then I will see everyone, including our newest student, tomorrow," finished Sensei Leung warmly to the class of now nine members who sat obediently around him.

Harry stayed after class for a few minutes to better introduce himself to the members of the advanced class that eagerly came up to meet him after their dismissal from class. They were all relatively friendly and surprised to find out he was only a week from being sixteen.

They were very complimentary on his fighting and having lasted so long against each opponent, and most admitted to under-estimating him, a mistake Stephen promised wouldn't be made again. Harry wished his new classmates a good day with assurances that he'd see them all tomorrow before walking over to meet Tonks and Kingsley who were sitting in the small viewing/guest area.

"That was terrific, Harry," started Kingsley proudly, "I expected you to get beat easily, I think everyone here did."

"Thanks... I guess," responded Harry both embarrassed from the praise but skeptical of the slight dig.

"Don't listen to Kingsley, Harry. He's just upset at losing, he bet against you on that last fight. I knew you would win one, and give those lumps a good fight," added Tonks happily as she elbowed her auror partner sharply in the ribs before snickering at his fake scowl.

"I shouldn't of bet against you Harry, but I thought you were still a long way off from being able to hold your own and join the class. I never could get into it, Sensei always said I was too slow and lumbering. I'm proud of you Harry," spoke Kingsley kindly as he studied the tired, sweaty, and bruised young wizard before him.

"Thanks Kingsley, but I couldn't have got in without your help," added Harry happily.

"Just you remember that if we ever fight again, Harry," responded Kingsley with a warm laugh as the trio made their way back to the alley they arrived in. "Harry, I'm not going to be able to come to classes anymore. Dumbledore's got me on watch duty at Headquarters after work, so I asked Bill to bring you to class tomorrow and Tonks can handle the rest of the week.

"What's going on at Headquarters?" asked Harry curiously.

"Moody thinks You-Know-Who is up to something, and is planning some kind of retaliatory strike, maybe to free his sentenced Death Eaters, so we are also trying to keep a few people on hand in case of an emergency. And also Dumbledore is worried about the safety of

Headquarters until your birthday when you take it over,” finished Kingsley honestly, knowing that Harry was allowed any information now on Dumbledore’s orders.

“Oh, that makes sense, Luna mentioned something about a dream she had with Death Eaters on my birthday in a letter Thursday morning. With all that was happening though I completely forgot,” added Harry thoughtfully, “she mentioned something about Voldemort wanting to retaliate too.”

“Really, well, I should go alert Albus, can you two get home okay?” added Kingsley quickly and importantly.

“Sure Kingsley,” replied Tonks with a growing smile on her pretty face as she shared a quick knowing glance with Harry.

“Bye Kingsley,” responded Harry as the older auror waved goodbye, leaving Harry and Tonks free to get ready for their first date.

“Let’s go back to your place, we can both get ready from there,” started Tonks into the silence after Kingsley’s departure.

“Okay, do you have a port-key?” added Harry curiously.

“Yes, but I thought that you would want to apparate there, I’ll be right behind you,” added Tonks with a flirtatious grin that got Harry very excited about the upcoming night.

“Wicked, see you on the sofa” winked Harry suggestively, before a tiny pop signified that he apparated home.

Harry arrived with a small pop, sitting comfortably on the sofa in his apartment den, waiting for Tonks to appear behind him. The gleam of excitement that was in her eyes when she arrived seconds later made Harry’s heart race excitedly. Tonks immediately tackled him on the sofa, and after a few minutes of snogging, told Harry to go take a shower quick, so she could go after him.

As soon as Harry finished in the bathroom, Tonks, along with a bag of stuff immediately commandeered it to get ready. Harry found an outfit

already lying out on his bed forcing him to swallow nervously; she wasn't lying about the leather pants. To accompany the skin tight black leather pants, she had picked out a tight black t-shirt with an electric blue flame imprinted on the front, and his new black dragonhide boots. After finishing getting dressed, Harry went to the sofa to continue reading his charms textbook while he waited.

"So, you'd rather study than take your girl out?" asked Tonks, who had snuck into the den without Harry's notice and was now standing in front of him grinning mischievously.

"Y-you ...you look incredible," spoke Harry in shock as he gazed at the slightly matching outfit of Tonks, especially the tight leather pants she sported.

"You clean up rather nicely too," replied Tonks with a penetrating gaze towards the younger wizard. "But we need to do something about your hair ...here."

Harry reached up to take the small piece of plastic from the grinning Tonks, and discovered it was an ID card, his ID card in fact, but the picture was kind of weird. All the information was similar to Tonks' own ID card, except the pictures and descriptions. The Harry in the small picture had electric blue spiky hair and eyes, was listed as taller and heavier, more muscular by the looks of the picture, which Harry wouldn't even know was him except for the dratted lightening bolt scar on his forehead.

"Why don't you try this look, it can double as our disguise and your proof to get in and drink," responded Tonks to Harry's silent studying of his new ID card.

"Proof, where are we going?" asked Harry curiously.

"Dinner and a club, and yes you will need that to get in." responded Tonks happily to the now accepting Harry who had just changed his hair, eyes, and muscular structure to better reflect the picture in his ID card, causing Tonks to lick her lips suggestively, an action replicated by the boyfriend returning her gaze.

"Sounds good, how are we getting there?" asked Harry as his eyes drank in the beautiful form of Tonks in her small pick tank top, matching bubblegum pink hair, and her tight leather pants.

"We're apparating of course," answered Tonks. "This time you have to follow me," she finished with a wink and a pop, disappearing in front of her younger boyfriend's startled happy eyes.

Harry appeared in a dark alley, and was immediately on guard until he heard Tonks' giggling very nearby. After a small pout which was ignored by his girlfriend's continuous laughter, Harry grabbed Tonks firmly around the waist and pulled her close into a passionate embrace instantly quieting her as he kissed her recklessly, allowing his hands to explore her exposed lower back and firm ass hungrily. Tonks immediately reciprocated by grabbing Harry's own tight ass with one hand while the other instantly went to his messy spiked blue hair.

It was several long minutes later that the pair left the quiet of the alley and headed towards their first stop, which turned out to be 'The Golden Bowl'. It was an Indian food restaurant that Tonks had been to once before and really enjoyed the food, much more than the prick who had brought her, and in no time the pair was brought to a knee-high table in the back corner filled with cushions for seats. They received a couple of curious looks in their black leather pants, and spiky electric blue or bubblegum pink hair, but most paid them no notice as they were seated comfortably by the older woman, who was their host.

They spent a good two hours enjoying one another's company while seated at their table, sharing a large plate of curry and rice. It was almost eleven at night when they left the restaurant, and walked a few blocks to 'The Cove', a late night dance club on London's east side. The wait was nothing, and in no time they were making their way through the crowded dark room towards the bar that lined the back wall of the large former warehouse turned night club.

'The Cove' Night Club was nothing more than an old abandoned and practically gutted out warehouse building. There were a few scattered old sofas and chairs on the outside along the walls, while the majority

of space was dedicated to the large group of people, from eighteen years old and up who were dancing enthusiastically to the thumping and loud techno music that pumped out of the large man-sized speakers set up at every corner of the darkened club. They had also scattered a few neon and blacklights throughout, so that you could sort of see.

“What do you want to drink, Harry?” asked Tonks as they bumped their way to the far wall and the action-packed bar that serviced all the club’s patrons.

“I don’t know,” responded Harry honestly, not knowing much about muggle alcoholic drinks.

“Do you just want what I’m having?” she asked with a mischievous sparkle in her eyes that went unnoticed by Harry in the dull neon lights of the approaching bar.

“Sure, Tonks,” responded Harry with a slight smile toward his pretty girlfriend as he wedged his way behind her as she squeezed up to the crowded bar.

“Four shots of Cuervo ...gold,” spoke a friendly Tonks toward the large heavily tattooed twenty-something bartender that came to her asking for her drink order as he stared hungrily at the attractive pink-haired witch.

“Sure doll,” he responded with a flirtatious wink and smile, that instantly made Harry’s insides burn with an unknown feeling of protectiveness towards his girlfriend which he admitted moments later as jealousy.

“That’s six quid doll,” he continued as he poured out four shots of the gold semi-transparent liquid, never taking his ogling eyes off Tonks’ chest, further enraging the now very jealous wizard who was broken from his thoughts by Tonks voice in his ear.

“Here Harry, these two are yours,” she spoke as she grabbed his hand and pulled him closer to her at the crowded bar and pointed to the two shot glasses on the right.

“Cheers,” said Harry nervously as he eyed the liquid shot, glad to be left by the flirting bartender who had shot him a nasty glare when Tonks made his presence known to the tattooed barkeep.

“Cheers,” she replied right before taking the first shot and downing it a second later, an action copied skeptically by her younger boyfriend, whose eyes widened as the burning alcohol went down his throat painfully, but with a warm feeling that lingered afterwards, which Harry enjoyed.

They each clinked their second shots and downed them quickly leaving a quid for the tattooed bartender despite his dislike for the man. Tonks then took Harry’s hand and dragged him out into the main part of the crowd gathered in the dance area. She noticed instantly that the club and particularly the dance floors were filled with a lot more women than men.

Tonks tightened her grip on Harry’s hand as she pulled him through the crowd of ogling women, all pausing to stare hungrily at the good-looking spiky blue haired man as he walked to the dance floor. Her irritation at the grabby and overly forward women who kept approaching Harry, trying to get him to dance, was really starting to bother her. She had never been jealous with any of her boyfriends before, but her feelings for Harry were different and she knew then and there that she cared for him more than she would admit. A tug on her hand forced her out of her irritated rumblings, and she turned to find Harry staring very passionately at her.

“You are the only person I will ever want to dance with Dora,” he spoke honestly and with a passion and conviction that made her heart race and drove all thoughts of jealousy from her as she looked into his emotion filled eyes.

“Ok!” she mumbled both excited from his statement and embarrassed from her jealousy when it was obvious now that he was only interested in her.

Harry reached out and grabbed her tiny waist, pulling her into him protectively and possessively, eliciting a sigh from the surprised but



content Tonks who gladly laid her head against her now much taller boyfriend's chest as she tightened her hold on him. They slowly started moving to the rhythmic pounding of the techno music after a slow kiss, before Tonks began a slightly livelier dance that turned the teenage wizard on to no end. They continued their dancing, oblivious to the jealous hungry stares they both received from members of the opposite, and sometimes the same, sex.

They had taken a few more trips to the bar for more rounds of shots, but never stayed off the dance floor for too long, both enjoying the feeling of each other and the intimate contact their dancing provided. In no time it seemed, the club was announcing last call and then shortly after turning on bright overhead lights to help usher everyone out now that it was past three am. Harry and Tonks took their time, slowly leaving the club in each others arms, still oblivious to others around them.

They walked slowly, enjoying the quiet darkness of the streets, and slight weariness from their alcohol buzzes. Getting back to the alleyway they had initially arrived in, Tonks pulled out a port-key she made before they left, not wanting to try drunken apparition. They both touched the new charm bracelet that Harry had given her before their date and then both felt the familiar tug behind their navels, propelling them towards their destination. They arrived in a crumpled heap, landing in the middle of Harry's large and very comfy bed.

"I knew I'd get you into bed eventually," purred Tonks happily, still slightly buzzing and disoriented from the drinking and port-key as she passionately started groping the body of her equally disoriented boyfriend who gave no protests.

"Oh really? So you were planning this?" asked Harry with an amused tone as his own hands began further exploration of his girlfriend's gorgeous body, overriding his own nervousness at the situation and position he now found himself in.

"Yeah, for weeks" huffed Tonks with a slight pout as she finally found Harry's head and began kissing him passionately and somewhat sloppily.

What ensued from there were the greatest thirty or so minutes of Harry's young life, far better than any Quidditch Cup or other achievement. He and Tonks both had returned to their true forms without breaking their frantic battle of tongues and hands. Tonks, being the more experienced was definitely the aggressor, and was soon straddling the younger wizard provocatively while her hands ran over his bare chest, his t-shirt not lasting for even a minute after their return home. She would continually move and grind her hips overtop of Harry's where she was positioned, eliciting gasps of pleasure from her younger less-experienced boyfriend and weird rubbing noises from their leather pants.

"These pants are driving me crazy," shouted Tonks at one point, fed up with the unusual rubbing noises they caused and the heat and sweat they left in their wake.

"Hey, don't yell at me," started Harry somewhat breathlessly as his mind tried to catch up with what was happening, "the leather pants were your call."

"I know! They just looked so good on you," she pouted as she reached under him and squeezed his ass tightly with both hands causing his eyes to shoot open as he stared hungrily at her mischievous look.

"They look MUCH better on you," replied Harry with an excited smile as his hands moved from her wiggling hips to grab her ass tightly, making his heart thump loudly in his chest at her excited squeal of delight.

"Thanks Harry, but you need be smoother than that if you want to get ME out of these pants," teased Tonks mischievously as her hands moved and began thumbing lightly with the belt and pant's buttons of her pinned younger boyfriend as his eyes widened in a mixture of emotions; surprise, nervousness, apprehension, fear, anxiety, hope, passion, and...love?

"Are you sure about this Dora?" asked Harry uncertainly as Tonks finished with the buttons and started rubbing her hands seductively

over the patch of hair that ran down from his belly button, exciting the happy and nervous teenager.

“I love when you call me Dora,” she purred seductively into his ear as she leaned over him and trailed a few light kisses down his neck getting a moan of joy from the still pinned Harry. “I’ve never been surer of anything in my life Harry.”

Tonks continued to kiss and nibble on Harry’s neck with soft tender wet lips, and then trailed them slowly down to his chest as she started scooting her hips down his legs. When her lips, and now her tongue got down to his stomach, her hands found the waist of his leather pants and gave them a hard tug down. She continued her southern descent, and her hand wrapped firmly around him stroking the erect organ excitedly before he felt Tonk’s wet warm mouth enclose its tip sending Harry into an ecstatic fit of pleasure as a deep guttural groan escaped his lips...

“Dora, will you stay here with me tonight?” asked Harry softly as he lay behind his girlfriend in bed much later, just holding her to him protectively.

“Mmmhmm,” mumbled Tonks sleepily as she squirmed her body against his affectionately, reveling in the warmth and comfort being with him had brought to her life, completely oblivious to what her movements did to the sleepy, but still very much aroused, teenager sharing the bed.

Harry squeezed Tonks toward him again, taking a deep breath of her natural black hair and feminine scent as he closed his eyes. He forced himself to organize his thoughts and then clear his mind, a difficult task with all the positive emotions he felt from the couples’ first real date and first physical signs of affection beyond snogging. Several minutes later, he let sleep claim him, still with an awed and happy smile on his face.

AN: Chapter ten, sorry for the wait, my wife actually decided to type this chapter out of pity. I cut my wrist at work a few weeks back, and am just starting to get my full mobility back. The next chapter is already half typed, so stay tuned. I have also finished hand writing

chapter 17 of 20, and am nearing the end. Yeah! Then I can finally move on to other stories.

## Chapter 11

Harry woke up very late Sunday morning the 23rd, judging by the bright sunlight penetrating into his bedroom, to an unusual weight on his chest and legs that had him quickly shooting open his intense green eyes. Instantly, he remembered the previous night and he and Tonks' intimate contact and sleeping arrangements as he saw her very peacefully sleeping while using his chest as her personal pillow. The thoughts of the previous night's activities however, forced other parts of Harry's teenage body to wake up, especially when he realized he was naked and what was last night his t-shirt was now the only thing on his girlfriend.

He practiced a few Occlumency exercises and meditation techniques to calm his raging teenage hormones, and was soon able to just watch Tonks sleeping in her natural form. For almost a half hour, she squirmed and wiggled like only she could before her eyes slowly started to flutter open. Her crystal blue eyes were slightly foggy as she slowly and happily awoke and changed them to her favorite shade of violet, to better match her now pink hair as she took a deep breath of Harry's familiar scent. Her thoughts quickly traveled back to last night's next step that Harry and her finally took in her estimation, and she could only burrow closer towards him and bury her face in his chest. Never had she met a man so caring and concerned for her well being, even above their own thoughts and wants. He was getting more comfortable with where things were headed between them, and hopefully one of these days, would take their relationship to one of the biggest steps.

"Morning Dora," he whispered hoarsely into her ear sending shivers of joy down her entire body as he hugged her protectively.

"Mmmhmm," she mumbled as she wiggled some to get further above Harry while keeping her head firmly buried in his chest.

"Dora ...we have to ...to get up," panted a struggling Harry.

"Don't you want to play with me, Harry?" she purred sleepily and seductively as her hands began their exploration of his naked body below her.

"You have no idea how much I want to play with you," he answered, "but it's almost eleven, and I don't think you want Bill finding us like this."

"You're no fun Harry," pouted Tonks playfully as she propped her head on his chest to stare more closely into his wonderful eyes, and try her best sad puppy look.

"Dora," caved Harry immediately, "...you know that's not fair," he added as she started wiggling again.

"Oh ...alright," she sighed playfully, "but I expect compensation tonight Mr. Potter."

"Really? Brilliant!" exclaimed Harry, happy that Tonks still wanted to be with him, and that he'd get to see her again tonight.

"I'll meet up with you and Bill at Sensei's when you're done with your class," she whispered before planting a firm and passionate kiss on his lips and then slipped out of bed and bolted to the bathroom to get ready and leave before Bill showed up.

Five quick minutes later she emerged from the bathroom dressed in spell cleaned clothes from yesterday before their date, and gave Harry a quick kiss before apparating to her apartment to gather her things before checking in at the Ministry as was her normal Sunday routine since being put on probation. Harry was left with only a few moments until Bill was due to arrive and rushed through a quick shower and change before he made it out to the den to fix some toast and jam, not wanting anything heavier on his still slightly queasy stomach from last night's first real foray into drinking.

"Hey Harry," spoke Bill as he appeared with a pop in Harry's den as Harry was just biting into his toast.

"Hi Bill," he replied as he gave the eldest Weasley a difficult smile through the food still in his mouth.

“Where are you’re glasses mate?” asked Bill skeptically, eyeing the younger wizard critically, trying to place what looked so different about Harry. He seemed to have grown some more muscle and his hair even seemed longer than usual, it had only been a week.

“Oh, sorry ...I just woke up ...I overslept this morning,” stuttered Harry lamely, and cursing himself for his carelessness for not remembering sooner. “I left them next to my bed ...I’ll go get

‘em.”

Harry was glad that Bill hadn’t followed him into his bedroom, as he found the new glasses Tonks had gotten for him the other day, to help him keep up the charade of still needing the stupid things. Slipping the charmed glasses on his face, he quickly became disoriented by the multitude of colors that seemed to glow around everything. He knew instantly that the different colored glows were in fact different magical auras or signatures that surrounded and made up everything in his bedroom, and probably the apartment since it was all practically transfigured or conjured, or at least created by magic. In the rest of the house he was currently living in, not that he ever seemed to have any more trouble with his Aunt and Uncle or considered himself living in their house still, he bet the glasses would be entirely ordinary and would not see the wide range of colors that probably filled everything in the magical world.

Vaguely remembering Tonks’ explanation of the glasses, he tapped them with his wand and said “aura off,” instantly removing the spectrum of colors that had been glowing all around him, and turning the glasses practically normal. He went back into the den to find Bill at his unused desk looking through his growing collection of recently purchased book that sat on a nearby shelf. He was currently thumbing through a large brown leather tome entitled, *Warding Your Home* with an increasing level of interest.

“Find something good?” asked Harry to both announce his presence and cause Bill to jump slightly and then scowl at Harry for sneaking up on him.

“Actually, this Warding Your Home is pretty good, where did you find it?” asked Bill as he now saw the Harry he was used to with short messy hair and glasses, although they looked like new ones. “Did you get new glasses?”

“Yeah, my old ones were so old, the prescription wasn’t even good anymore,” answered Harry quickly, having expected that question and then paused in thought. “Most of these came from Flourish & Blotts a few days ago,” he added with a wave to the shelf of unread books and new at least to him.

“Wow, I’m surprised they had stuff like this,” replied Bill, “...I guess I never really looked for anything there other than textbooks as a kid. Do you think I can borrow this until next week? I’ll let you borrow some of my warding books; they will help you get a better foundation to build on. I can send them tonight if you send Hedwig to the Burrow now, and I’ll send them back with her, I don’t think Errol’s up for that kind of delivery.”

“Sure, and you should try going to Flourish & Blotts with Hermione, I think she has the entire store and every book in it memorized,” laughed Harry jokingly.

“I think I might upset a certain younger brother of mine if I took you up on that suggestion,” laughed Bill.

“At least you don’t have to listen to them bickering all the time and pretending they don’t like one another,” replied Harry somewhat sarcastically, always enjoying his time and banter with Bill.

“I think they call that foreplay Harry,” laughed Bill uproariously at the petrified look on Harry’s face that came from thinking about his best friends doing that, plus his own actions last night with Tonks didn’t help his panic. “You do know about foreplay, right?”

“Uh ...yeah,” stuttered Harry with a growing blush at his embarrassment and panic still settled in his chest as he thought of what else he could say that wouldn’t incriminate him.



“So you do know about foreplay,” teased Bill happily, “who is the lucky girl?”

“Oh ...Uh ...n-nobody,” rushed out Harry unconvincingly, but with no plan of telling anyone about his and Tonks’ relationship.

“Fine, don’t tell me, but the twins won’t be as lenient,” added Bill in an amused voice.

“Whew ...I’m not worried about the twins,” breathed out Harry with a sigh of relief, causing Bill’s eyebrows to rise questioningly.

“You’re not? Well, you should be, when it comes to women those two can be merciless. And now with their joke shop and all the resources they have at their disposal. I’d be more worried of them if I were you,” added Bill thoughtfully, “unless ...you have something on them?”

“Well, then it’s a good thing I do have something on them,” replied Harry with a knowing smirk that raised Bill’s curiosity even more.

“You do?” asked Bill disbelievingly.

“Who do you think financed their joke shop?” shot back Harry as his smile grew mischievous.

“You didn’t?” asked Bill in absolute shock as he studied the amused expression on his younger friends’ face.

“Yeah, I did. It was actually a great investment, that joke shop of theirs is going to make us all a lot of money,” replied Harry.

“They made you their partner?” Bill asked surprisingly.

“Yep, that they did,” answered Harry, “and it would probably not be in their best interest to antagonize their primary investor too much.”

“That’s genius,” answered Bill, “so what did you want to do today?”

“I was hoping you could show me some spells you used last week, and maybe even duel me again, if that’s alright?” asked Harry.

“So you want another real challenge, huh?” teased Bill with a large smile on his face that showed just how much he was enjoying this time spent with the quirky green eyed wizard.

Harry and Bill spent hours dueling one another, only breaking for a small sandwich lunch before returning to the grind. Bill was still able with his vast and rare spell knowledge to defeat Harry, but Harry’s speed and resourcefulness made the duels much more entertaining than last weeks’. After they were done, Bill went over a whole bunch of the spells he had used, and was amazed that Harry was even able to pick up and perform some of them, let alone all with practically no difficulty.

By quarter to four, Bill handed the portkey Dumbledore had made to Harry, and the two were whisked away to the same side alley they arrived in for Harry’s martial arts lesson yesterday. Harry led Bill to the dojo, careful to remind the older wizard that this was an advanced form of muggle fighting known as Jujitsu, a more offensive and physical form than what Bill and Charlie witnessed last week between Harry and Kingsley.

Bill was excited to watch the martial arts lesson, and mentioned watching a bunch of really good Bruce Lee movies with a muggle-born friend of his from Egypt. Harry was intrigued, having heard of the legendary Bruce Lee from Dudley and his friends who went through their Kung-fu phase years ago. Harry left Bill in the small viewing area as he went out to the center mat and began doing some basic stretching exercises to make sure his body was warmed up as the rest of the class slowly trickled in from the locker rooms he had yet to use.

Bill watched fascinated at the speed and power that these students displayed after going through a strenuous looking ‘kata’ and pairing off to begin the even more intense fighting. The old man who ran the class had partnered with Harry, and instead of fighting, was showing the newest and youngest member of the class some more basic moves and techniques, as well as another very difficult looking kata. Halfway through the class, Tonks arrived and took up a seat next to Bill, as they both enjoyed watching the class.

“Ouch! That looks painful,” grimaced Bill sympathetically as he watched Harry being put through the paces of another new kata that seemed to require a great deal of flexibility, one of the few traits that Harry was behind the others in, from his lack of practice and consistent stretching.

“Yeah ...and just think, this is only one of the things he does everyday,” replied Tonks with a touch of pride in her voice as she thought about Harry’s determination and drive to get better and stronger, and not neglecting any aspect of working both his body and magic.

“You don’t have to convince me, Tonks. He and I dueled and practiced for over four hours before coming here. I can hardly stand up I’m so sore, and here he is jumping, spinning, kicking, punching, and dodging away at a pace I couldn’t even accomplish in my dreams,” sighed Bill in a mixture of pride and disbelief as he continued his study of the Boy Who Lived.

“Did you know that he runs for almost two hours every morning, lifts weights, practices Tai Chi, duels, studies, and comes to this class now every day,” spoke Tonks proudly as she too watched Harry and Sensei Leung going through several katas, breaking them down into the individual moves and elements before trying to put it all together.

“Yeah, I know ...,” started Bill with a deep sigh,” it makes me feel so lazy.”

“Ha ...yeah, me too,” replied Tonks with a slight chuckle as she followed Harry’s movements.

“None of my brothers or I would ever be this dedicated to improving our body, mind, and magic,” added Bill still in awe of the teenage wizard.

“Most aurors don’t train this hard,” replied Tonks knowingly, and with a small level of satisfaction at that fact.

"Nobody trains that hard," added Bill. "Why do you think he's pushing himself so hard? He was never really like this before."

"Before when?" questioned Tonks rhetorically. "Since he was again forced to fight You-Know-Who and watch his godfather die a month ago. He's been going at this pace all summer ...and I don't think he'll be slowing down anytime soon."

"He's going to be better than me any day now," started Bill, trying to slightly change the topic, not wanting to question Harry's motives in front of someone, who was very obviously his supporter, and also knowing it really wasn't his place to question at all. "He almost beat me a few times when we dueled today, and probably will next week ...it's just incredible."

"Yeah, I know," started Tonks, "but don't worry; he is a gracious winner and will still listen to your advice even after he realizes that he's better than you."

"Is he better than you, Tonks?"

"Of course he is," she replied with a snort, "he gets better every day like most progress over years. Yeah, I can still hold my own against him most of the time, but we both know that in the next few weeks, he will probably far surpass my abilities. He is still only scratching the surface of what he's capable of now that he is properly motivated."

Bill gave Tonks an unusual look of understanding mixed with curiosity, not completely sure what to make of her last statement. He knew that Harry was training hard, but didn't know any of the real reasons behind it, other than he was Harry Potter, He-who-must-not-be-named's number one enemy. If it was him he would have trained too, but Harry had always been on the top of that list, and had never before taken training and self-improvement so seriously since well ...Sirius died. He wondered if that wasn't a motivating factor, losing his practically last adult parent and facing off against the evil one again. It would probably motivate him if he lived through the same; he continued to wonder as Harry went through a series of difficult movements.

“Okay class, let’s gather around,” spoke Sensei Leung loudly over the constant noise of the many fights taking place in the large one room dojo causing a hush to fall over the students and visitors respectively. “As most of you know, the Annual Mixed Martial Arts Tournament is next weekend, and I will again be giving you all the weekend off on the condition that you either sign up to participate or go to observe the many other fighters and styles. I would love to see a few of you veterans to give it a try; it is a wonderful learning experience for everyone involved.”

“Yes Sensei,” responded the nine members of the advanced Jujitsu class in unison as they sat obediently around the older man.

“Very good, you can pick up the information flyer for the Tournament on your way out as well as registration forms to compete. I will see you all tomorrow, and have a wonderful evening,” he finished with an encouraging smile and a slight bow before he turned and left the now chatting students to gather their things.

“Hey Harry, how did it go today?” asked Tonks curiously as Harry approached her and Bill, and she watched his eyes light up at her appearance making her smile widen considerably.

“Good ...but I am so sore,” he whined good naturedly eliciting hearty chuckles from Bill and a snort of amusement from Tonks.

“I’ll bet Harry,” responded an amused Bill, “well ...I’m going to take off. You know how my mum is when we’re late for Sunday Dinner. I’ll see you soon, and thanks for the book loan.”

“No problem Bill, see you next week,” answered Harry easily, before Bill turned and rushed back to a hidden location so he could apparate to the Burrow in time for the Weasley Family’s Sunday Dinner.

“So, what are your plans tonight Harry?” asked Tonks seductively as she batted her eyelashes playfully at the younger wizard now that they were alone.

“Um ...I was kind of hoping that ...that you might want to go to the cinema with me ...I’ve never really been,” replied Harry somewhat

shyly and embarrassed about asking Tonks on another different kind of date.

"I'd love to Harry," squealed Tonks excitedly, planting a quick kiss on his cheek and grabbing his hand and dragging him out of the dojo and to their normal apparition spot. "Only if you go home and take a shower first."

"Oh ...yeah, good point," replied Harry sheepishly as they neared their alley, "see you at home," he added with a wink before disappearing with only the tiniest hint of sound, followed quickly by the surprised but very happy young auror.

Harry and Tonks walked out of the cinema hours later having both really enjoyed the movie and still laughing over the outrageously bizarre American comedy they saw called 'the Bird Cage.' They walked hand in hand enjoying one another's company and the cool breeze of the warm summer night for a good while after their movie, in no hurry to return home. By eleven, they decided to apparate back to Harry's apartment and were lazily cuddling on the den's sofa soon afterwards.

"If I remember correctly Harry," started Tonks softly several minutes after arriving at Harry's, "you owe me some play time ...and I was kind of hoping to cash it in tonight, if it's alright that I stay over again?"

"Sure you can," stumbled Harry in a mixture of disbelief and joy that Tonks still wanted anything to do with him.

"Harry, don't act so surprised," she laughed quietly, and having a good idea of what he was thinking, "I really enjoy spending my time with you, and last night was one of the best I've ever had."

"Yeah?" asked Harry thickly, who got a groan from Tonks as an answer before she grabbed his face and forcefully brought her lips down onto his, capturing them in a lust filled snog that hopefully said how she felt better than words could.

“Yes Harry it was,” answered a breathless Tonks, “and I’d like a few more of them with you before you go to the Burrow or Grimmauld Place for the rest of the summer.”

“Oh yeah ...I forgot about that,” started Harry somewhat depressed as he thought of having to give up all the alone time he got now with Tonks, before another thought struck. “Don’t forget about my new trunk and the tent inside,” he added with a large smile, while thinking about the possibilities for mischief and alone time right under everyone’s noses regardless of where he spent the rest of the summer.

“I didn’t even think about the trunk ...that would be perfect for us to get a little privacy every now and then,” replied Tonks now with a matching smile that brightened up her heart shaped face and violet colored eyes.

It was many hours later that the new couple had finally given in to sleep, after more of the same exploring as the night before eventually led them to tire. Harry practiced his Occlumency right before falling asleep with Tonks’ head resting peacefully on his bare chest as they cuddled closer together, enjoying the feel of the other sharing their bed. Harry woke just after five, after his now customary three hour sleep, and had to gently untangle himself from Tonks as he slipped out of bed and went for his morning run around Little Whinging.

The next three days at Privet Drive absolutely flew by with Harry continuing his physical and magical training. He ran, did Tai Chi, lifted weights, dueled and studied with Tonks, went to his advanced Jujitsu classes, and watched a lot of movies and television with Tonks each night. He also had company in his bed each night, for which he loved, despite their intimacy levels remaining pretty much the same. Tonks didn’t want to rush or pressure her underage boyfriend despite her own desires, and was content to wait until it was right with the man she now knew that she loved without any doubt.

Harry’s personal studying was taking a backseat, because he now spent most of his free time snogging and fooling around with Tonks instead of pouring over all of his new books. He had however, managed to finish his first cursory reading of NEWT Charms, his

upcoming textbook, and had moved on to the appropriately named NEWT Transfiguration which he found much easier after all the work he had done creating and furnishing his apartment. It wasn't until dinner Wednesday night a few days before his birthday that he knew his stay at Privet Drive was coming to an abrupt end.

"I think tonight's Order meeting is about moving you to the Burrow, Harry," spoke Tonks with a slight edge of disappointment in her usual cheerful voice as she stared at her boyfriend's intense emerald eyes trying to gage his reaction.

"Oh really," he replied with equal disappointment, wanting to see his friends, but not wanting to end the great situation he had at his apartment on Privet Drive and the company he got to keep, "what are we going to do?"

"Well, I'm still responsible for taking you to your Jujitsu class every day, but other than that I'm not too sure. I don't really want to go back to work, I might ask if I should continue to guard you for the Order since there won't be too many adults around you during the days," replied Tonks with a sad smile as she realized how much of her days were spent in the company of the man next to her, and not wanting to give that up.

"Maybe we could go out before or after my class, just the two of us?" asked Harry hopefully as he too wanted to keep the woman of his dreams close to him.

"Yeah, we probably can a little, but I don't think Molly will let you skip meals to go on dates, even if it was with Ginny. But she especially won't let you go on them with me, so we really won't get too much time together," finished Tonks dejectedly as she thought that they might not have any more nights or days together, causing her eyes to tear up slightly at the realization.

"Dora, it will be okay, I promise ...we'll find a way to be together," spoke Harry comfortingly as he pulled his girlfriend closer, holding her protectively in his strong arms trying to soothe her worries.



"I don't want to share you with anyone," pouted Tonks weakly as she clung to Harry and breathed in his scent.

"You don't have to worry about that, Dora," started Harry softly as he leaned back to search her eyes and convey the feelings he had before leaning in for a chaste kiss followed by a whisper. "I am yours and yours alone."

Their kissing lasted for several minutes as they snuggled together on Harry's sofa enjoying the closeness and feel of one another. Eight o'clock however came quickly, and Tonks had to say her goodbyes and go to Headquarters for the weekly Order meeting leaving Harry alone once again in his apartment. He grabbed his NEWT Transfiguration textbook and continued his cursory read of the next two years of the subject.

Tonks arrived in the dirty and dark entranceway of Number Twelve Grimmauld Place after eight to find the house lacking in its normal activity until she remembered that she was late. She went to the kitchen, and opened the wooden door causing everyone inside to immediately stop their chatter and greet the late newcomer. Every Order member was already present, sitting around the large and heavily scarred wooden table looking at Tonks as she found the last remaining seat between Bill Weasley and Remus Lupin.

"Greetings Nym- ...Tonks," spoke Albus Dumbledore to the pink haired late arrival, trying his best to remember the young auror and Harry's wishes to be called by her last name.

"Hello Headmaster," she replied with a smile that didn't reach her eyes despite her happiness at hearing the correct use of her name since her mind was still on the green eyed teenager she had just left.

"Good, now that everyone is here, we can begin the meeting," started Albus importantly causing an instant hush to fall over the other members of the Order of the Phoenix, "Severus ...why don't you begin?"

"Very well, Albus," replied Snape shortly and tiredly as he stood roughly and swept the room's occupants with his cold dark eyed glare.

“The Dark Lord is planning something big; he has Bellatrix and the Carrows training new recruits around the clock. He himself however is rarely seen outside of his personal chambers, and I believe still not well--,” he paused due to the muttering that began at this statement, causing his customary scowl to deepen at those who can’t control their emotions better.

“As I was saying,” he spoke loudly over the voices, “the Dark Lord has me brewing him daily headache potions, restorative draughts, pepper-up, and a very dark potion known as the vitae sanguis, or the blood of life. It is a highly effective strengthening potion far beyond anything that could be purchased or made by less than a Full Master, as it uses unicorn blood. He has not come out and said anything, nor would he, but I believe he is still suffering from the mental attack last week courtesy of the brat,” sneered Severus scathingly, angry once again at Saint Potter for making him do more work on top of that horrible night of pain last week.

“Severus, we all know how you feel about Mr. Potter ...please continue,” reprimanded Dumbledore shortly to his agitated Potion Master and spy.

“Fine,” retorted Severus sharply, “The Dark Lord is spending a great deal of time in his library, apparently looking for other ways to block his mind’s connection with Potter. Apparently, he now feels when the kid has a strong emotion and it has been causing him to be extra ornery. He killed two recruits at last night’s meeting just for not bowing properly, and has been even more unpleasant with others he usually leaves alone, like the Carrows and Yaxley. He was livid after the trials last week, and I expect whatever he is planning is in retaliation against the one he feels responsible for it all.”

“You think he’s going after Harry?” asked Remus Lupin, one of the few who didn’t outwardly show his immediate fear during Severus’ report.

“For whatever reason,” started Snape snidely, with a knowing look to Dumbledore, “the Dark Lord wants Potter dead, and is most likely planning the boy’s demise. He also just sent emissaries to request

meetings with Fenrir Greyback's group as well as the Dementors, so we must also keep an eye on Azkaban."

"Thank you Severus," replied Albus Dumbledore stoically, showing every one of his 162 years. "Remus, what is the status of Greyback's group?"

"As of last month, they were only about fourteen strong, with four wizards among them, including Greyback. I guess they have been having problems getting bigger numbers because of competition within the pack, newbie's don't usually last too long," he finished with a tired and ragged shake of his head as if trying to clear the pain and anger he still held towards the bastard that bit and turned him as a child.

"Thank you Remus," replied Albus with a reassuring smile to the obviously exhausted werewolf. "I have continued to press Cornelius to do something about Azkaban and the Dementors, but he has been less than helpful in that avenue. However, Amelia has assured me that she is trying to look into alternatives to securing the prison or the prisoners. Hagrid ...how did things go on your journey to the giant camps?"

"They're still remainin' neutral for now sir," started the friendly half-giant appearing at his first Order meeting since the end of the last school term. "Most remember how they was treated in the first war, but some of 'em seam really interested in siding with that monster again."

"Thank you Hagrid, and is Madam Maxime back in her school?" asked Dumbledore warmly, knowing he would have to write her and get her position on the journey as well.

"Yes sir, we got there this mornin' ...she arranged my transportation home," finished Hagrid proudly at the warm look of praise that the Headmaster gave his Keeper of Keys and friend.

"Good," replied Dumbledore with a slight pause as he surveyed those present warmly, happy to move on to other topics of discussion. "I

have decided to allow Mr. Potter to move to the Burrow tomorrow, where he will stay for the remainder of the summer.”

“Really?” squealed an excited Molly Weasley who had been asking the Headmaster for just this thing almost every chance she got.

“Yes, and I’ll need a volunteer or two to act as the boy’s guard,” continued Albus warmly.

“Are you moving him after his four to six o’clock class?” asked Tonks, speaking up for the first time as she received a great many blank looks from those who had no idea about the martial arts class.

“What class?” sneered Severus Snape, obviously upset at the teenager’s lack of respect about staying at his home like he was told.

“Harry’s taking an advanced Jujitsu martial arts class from my old Sensei. I approved it with Dumbledore,” responded Kingsley Shacklebolt proudly as he looked back at the many still confused faces.

“And he’s good too,” added Bill Weasley happily, knowing all too well that the praise would further irritate the Slytherin Head of House to no end.

“Yes, that he is,” added Kingsley reminiscently, while rubbing his left shoulder that was still slightly sore from his and Harry’s last practice fight, something that wasn’t missed by most members present.

“You mean muggle fighting?” asked a very curious Dedalus Diggle who had an Arthur Weasley type fascination and lack of understanding towards their non-magical brothers and sisters.

“Yes, Jujitsu is a form of muggle hand to hand fighting from the Far East,” replied Kingsley knowingly to the gathered Order members.

“Tonks, can you continue to take Harry to and back from these lessons and continue as his guard for the rest of the summer?” asked Albus curiously from his seat at the head of the table.

“Yes, of course sir,” replied Tonks evenly, hiding her happiness that she would still have a reason to be around her man for the rest of the summer despite the new living arrangements.

“Very good ...Bill, you have also been to this class, correct?” asked Albus with a look to the long haired eldest Weasley son.

“Yes sir,” replied Bill easily.

“Wonderful,” added Dumbledore, “would you be able to go to tomorrow’s lesson, and then help set up Mr. Potter and Ms. Tonks with the new wards at the Burrow afterwards.

“Sure,” responded Bill, “I can be at the lesson around six, and then bring them to the Burrow and get them set to the wards.”

“Wonderful,” responded Albus with a renewed twinkle in his eyes, “Tonks, will you let Mr. Potter know of the plans tomorrow, and return his bedroom to normal before you leave for his martial arts class?”

“Sure,” replied Tonks happily, already thinking of how to move all of Harry’s transfigured apartment furniture as well as the wall paintings they had done, since she knew she wanted to make sure those were kept.

“Hopefully, by next week, Headquarters’ wards will be fully restored under the new Head of the Black Family. I am planning to bring Mr. Potter here myself on his birthday to transfer ownership and control, and then rebuild and strengthen the now failing wards and enchantments,” finished Albus with a tone of finality that was welcomed by most in attendance who were eager to get home and out of the dilapidated and dark home of the Blacks, especially since the death of Sirius and the deterioration of the previous wards still loosely protecting it.

“You still have your assignments, and we’ll be in touch soon. Have a good rest of your evening,” added Albus as he stood from his seat and with a final nod, swept out of the room, closely followed by the Hogwarts contingent returning to the castle.

This started the mass exodus of Order members leaving Grimmauld Place for their own homes, or in Tonks' case, returning to Harry's apartment. She said a quick goodbye to Bill and the Weasleys, promising to see them tomorrow, and then headed off in search of Remus. She had talked to the lone person living at Headquarters full-time after every meeting, and tonight would be no different. She found him in the large sitting room, the only relatively comfortable and clean room in the dilapidated old house, and the two talked for several minutes. She explained more of Harry's summer, his martial arts class, and also about Harry's guilt over Sirius' death, something the two had talked a lot about this summer, and even gave Remus a photo of Harry in front of the painted scene in his bedroom with Moony, Padfoot, and Prongs.

"He's talked a lot about it Remus, but he still feels some blame and guilt for not opening and using the two-way mirrors, or taking Kreacher's word, and needing the Order to come and bail him out. He still feels bad about his friends' involvement and them getting hurt or targeted just because of their association with him. But he is definitely getting better, just yesterday we talked about his and Hermione's rescue of Buckbeak and Sirius over two years ago and some of his memories of Sirius ...it's been good for both of us," spoke Tonks with difficulty at points, still battling with her own grief over Sirius' death and guilt at losing to Bellatrix, but knew that the summer she was having was truly helping deal with her and Harry's demons.

"Harry does seem to put a lot of burdens and blame on his own shoulders, so much so that I worry about him cracking under his own pressure, let alone the rest of the wizarding world's," replied Remus thoughtfully, and with a sad smile on his prematurely lined face.

"Don't worry too much, Remus. Harry is doing much better, and is made of pretty strong stuff ...I think he can handle it, or is at least trying to, and that's all we can ask," replied the pink haired metamorph positively.

"Yeah, he is one determined wizard when he wants to be," chuckled Remus, "he was incredible at thirteen learning the Patronus Charm, and then casting one that repelled almost a hundred Dementors is just unheard of. I don't think I could even drive back more than two,

and what those foul creatures do to him,” Remus paused to shudder, “I can’t imagine what he goes through.”

“Yeah, I know,” responded Tonks in a whisper as the two slipped into an uneasy silence as they both kept their further worries over the young green eyed wizard to themselves for several quiet moments.

“Well, I better get going Remus. I’ll see you at his party right?” asked Tonks after she remembered who she was keeping waiting, and stood to get up.

“You bet Tonks, and thanks ...thanks for everything,” responded a sincere Remus who waved goodbye to the pink haired young woman before she left, still clutching the photograph now bringing small tears to the edges of his vision as he saw his cub and his beautiful painting of his two best friends. It was not always the healthiest for him to be alone in Sirius’ house with only his thoughts of better times to accompany him, but the photograph brought with it a small hope that he was not truly alone ...he still had Harry.

After leaving Grimmauld Place, Tonks apparated straight back into Harry’s apartment, landing lightly in the expanded den. Harry was still in the same position on the sofa, reading from his new Transfiguration textbook when she arrived. He lifted his head just in time to catch a pink haired blur that lunged at him, leaping into his lap and knocking him backwards, deeper into the comfy sofa as she instantly began kissing him passionately.

“Hi Dora ...how’d the ...meeting go?” Harry asked happily between breaks in kisses, really enjoying the squirming body of his older girlfriend above him.

“We can talk later Harry,” panted Tonks excitedly, “but let’s go to bed now!”

Harry woke up the following morning exhausted, but with the largest and happiest smiles he could ever remember plastered on his tired face. The reason for his smile was the currently naked woman squirming on top of him in his bed, and also last nights memories which permeated his thoughts pleasantly. He had felt happiness

before, but nothing like this. An utter feeling of warmth that filled his whole body making it tingle with energy as he held the object of this happiness tightly in his arms.

Suddenly, another movement of Tonks' sleeping body sent an ever stronger charge through his body that gave him a sense of contentment he could compare to nothing else. He truly enjoyed just the feeling of her warm silky skin on his, and his early morning arousal attested to that as it too awoke from a long night, ready to play again. He had a hard time understanding how his relationship with Tonks had grown so quickly and intimately, having no real experience himself, but realized that their relationship seemed to move at the pace that Tonks set, like she did again last night.

Harry never thought he could feel so much for one person, and especially so soon after Sirius' death, but Tonks changed everything he thought he knew about relationships and feelings. She was much more than a girlfriend; she had become his best friend and partner. She knew his secrets and fears, and never judged him against some ludicrous image of the-Boy-Who-Lived. She truly and genuinely cared about Harry, just Harry, and that thought more than any incredible intimate encounters they shared, meant so much more to the younger wizard.

Not wanting to wake the sleeping and yet still slightly squirming Tonks, Harry rolled quietly and maneuvered out from under her and dragged himself to the shower before he would go out on his last morning run at Privet Drive. His shower was quick, knowing he'd need another when he returned, before he threw on a pair of shorts and his shoes and took off out of his room and out the back door of his Aunt and Uncle's house.

His last run around his relative's neighborhood however, was not as relaxing as he would have liked. He had gotten a later start today, and while running through the streets of Little Whinging, many of the neighbors were already up and starting their day causing the stares and whispers to follow him throughout. At one point, he even saw Piers Polkiss getting ready to go somewhere with his mum, and the rat faced boy just stared unblinkingly at the tall and slender form of



Dudley's crazy cousin that no longer looked like the pipsqueak he used to be.

"Morning Piers," yelled Harry nonchalantly as he ran past the stunned boy and his mother getting into their BMW, causing them both to look suspiciously at boy they considered a criminal.

Harry ignored theirs and everyone else's unusual looks as he ran by them and back towards Privet Drive. He arrived just in time to find Uncle Vernon kissing his wife goodbye on the front door step as he prepared to leave for work. Having not really seen much of his relatives since Tonks arrived and redecorated his room, he was curious as to what they thought was going on in the formerly smallest bedroom of Privet Drive, but knew better than to say anything about it.

"Good morning Uncle Vernon ...Aunt Petunia," he started politely as he approached the now splitting pair as Vernon turned towards his precious Mercedes and froze on the spot.

"Y-Y-You?" he stuttered slowly after his wife gasped and clutched her chest theatrically, not knowing what to make of their good for nothing nephew who they had been ignoring and hadn't seen in weeks ...pretty much since he arrived.

"Yes ...it's me," answered Harry sarcastically and with a slight bow that he knew would further infuriate the pair. "However, I must be off ...I'm leaving today ...and hopefully for good."

"What?" asked a shocked Aunt Petunia, still seemingly rooted to her spot leaning against the front door?

"I'm leaving by four this afternoon, and if all goes well ...I won't ever have to come back," answered Harry flatly, and with enough emphasis that his relatives had little to say, and only nodded dumbly as he walked past them in silence.

Harry headed straight for the shower, to cool his sweaty and hot body after his lengthening run, deciding to give himself a break from the weights and punching bags for the day. He had only just entered the hot water stream when he heard movement in the bathroom, and a

second later, Tonks was joining him in the cozy shower stall surprising the younger wizard and putting a very large smile on his face.

"If I didn't know you were outside running, you would have some serious explaining to do," started Tonks playfully. "It's not very gentlemanly to leave a woman in bed after sex without as much as a note."

"I'm sorry Dora, I just couldn't wake you, you looked so happy and peaceful," answered Harry honestly, albeit somewhat playing along.

"I was happy and peaceful because I had your body keeping me warm and acting as my personal pillow," she replied as she tried to match her earlier position only now vertical in the shower bringing her own naked body right up against Harry's before reaching up to grab his face and snog him senseless...

"We need to start packing Harry," started Tonks after finishing a very relaxing and much needed lunch since their morning's activities made them miss breakfast.

"Oh ...yeah," replied Harry with a sudden realization of the overwhelming task before him.

"Don't worry," started Tonks calmly, already understanding Harry's apprehension, "we'll just shrink everything for now, and move it into your tent inside of your trunk."

"Great idea," added Harry happily. "Can we do that to the wall paintings too?"

"Yeah, but first we need to separate them from the walls ...don't worry, it's a pretty easy spell," added Tonks when she saw his confusion, forgetting that Harry was just not very familiar with certain areas of magic, namely packing.

"Do you think that you can work on the paintings, and I'll pack up the books into the trunk's library?" asked Harry somewhat sadly as he

thought about leaving the place he had actually come to enjoy during this summer.

By three-thirty, the pair had everything from Harry's apartment shrunk down and moved into his trunk's various compartments, or inside the tent's main den. The paintings had also been re-hung on the bare walls of the tent's main room with password activated sticking charms, making the tent feel a lot like the apartment they were leaving. The final step was to undo all the expansion charms which took several minutes until the smallest bedroom of Number Four was returned to its pathetic and dilapidated state.

The pair then left a small note on the bedroom's door saying goodbye to the Dursleys before they apparated away to Harry's Martial Arts lesson with his shrunk trunk in Tonks' pocket. They made it to Sensei Leung's Dojo with only a minute to spare, leaving Harry scrambling to stretch and prepare for the grueling class. Tonks took her seat in the small viewing area and enjoyed watching her man get run through the Sensei's paces before they split off into pairs again to fight.

Harry and Malcolm, a twenty-seven year old tall and lean black man whom he had been practicing with so far in his Jujitsu class, were planning out going to watch some of this weekends Mixed Martial Arts Tournament as their practice fighting came to an end. Malcolm was very friendly and had a great sarcastic sense of humor, and was the second youngest person in class ahead of only Harry. He took an immediate liking to the youngest member in class, remembering how hard it was for anyone to join this class, let alone a teenager with little martial arts background. He himself had been studying Jujitsu since he was seven years old, and was one of Sensei Leung's first beginner students when he opened the Dojo on London's East Side.

Today at the end of class, four people announced their participation in the weekends Tournament, and the others began making their plans to go and watch. Malcolm was going to meet Harry at one in the afternoon at the entrance to the large auditorium only a few miles from the Dojo, and was planning to bring his partner since Harry said he would probably be showing up with a small army of at least Tonks, and probably a few Weasleys as well if they were allowed. Malcolm

didn't seem to mind at all at how many people came, and reassured Harry that they would have a great time and a much needed break from the daily grind they put their bodies through in class every day.

When they were finally dismissed from class, Harry walked over to the viewing area to see a smiling Bill and Tonks waiting for him. Tonks' smile seemed a bit forced, and Harry knew why seeing as he didn't want their summer alone together to end either. The last four days had been the best of his life sharing his bed and life with the cute young auror, and he was just as sad that it had now come to an end. Bill had only arrived moments before, and sounded excited about the weekend's Tournament and asked if he could tag along on Sunday since it was his only day off.

"Yeah sure Bill, I have to go both days instead of class anyway," started Harry, "and Malcolm said the more the merrier."

"Wicked, maybe I should fire call Charlie and get him to come too?" postulated Bill more to himself than his companions as the group began the short walk to their hidden side alley.

"How are we getting there?" asked Harry as he approached the quiet and well placed alleyway.

"Portkey of course," replied Bill in slight confusion as he fumbled in his pocket until he pulled out the small homemade knit stocking.

He missed the small look Harry and Tonks shared as Tonks tried to keep herself from laughing at Harry's question and slip up, or the wink and smile Harry sent to the pretty metamorph as they waited for him to find what he was looking for. One final glance around them proved they were alone as Bill produced the sock that would take them to the Burrow.

"Well, come on ...grab hold," spoke Bill easily, while holding out the stocking to Harry and Tonks who both grabbed it at the same time and managed to get their hands touching before they felt the all to familiar tug behind their naval as the portkey took them to their destination.

AN: Finally! I am now working on chapters 19 & 20, and have mapped out the end of this story, so it shouldn't be much longer until I am finished hand writing and can then focus on the typing aspect of this project. I thank you all for your continued patience and readership, and if you feel so inclined, please review.

## Chapter 12

“Uh Bill ...aren't we a little far from the Burrow?” asked Harry skeptically as he stared down the long path he knew to lead to his best friend's house a good distance away.

“Yeah, but I have to key you and Tonks into the new wards ...and as you can see, they run a good way around the Burrow now,” gestured Bill dramatically to the barely visible almost film of magic that stood before them.

“Wow,” spoke Harry quietly in awe as he saw the small shimmer of magic Bill had told him to look for in determining ward boundaries, before discretely tapping his glasses with his wand, allowing a full color spectrum view of the wards and surrounding magic and auras to appear through the lenses he had just started getting used to over the last few days of his stay in Privet Drive.

“Thanks ...now let's get you two keyed in so we don't have to always come all the way out here,” replied Bill nonchalantly as he moved closer to the shimmering dome and raised his wand.

He then gently touched his wand to the shimmering ward's edge, making it flash a light blue for a split second before pulling back his now lightly glowing wand and muttering a quick spell first over Tonks, and then Harry. As the spell ended, they could both feel a small tingling sensation settle over them as they established a connection with the Weasley's new wards. They both glowed the same light blue a second later, tying them to the wards and the alert system, so they could come and go as they pleased, and also know if someone ever tried to break in.

“Thanks Bill,” started Harry happily, “...so how's that new book on wards?”

“I love it ...it's really complex thought, I've been reading it every night now for days, and am hoping to maybe add some of the techniques to these wards once I've got them all figured out,” responded the eldest Weasley child, “thanks again for the loan.”

“No problem,” responded a smiling Harry, who now knew what to get Bill for his birthday or Christmas, whichever came first.

“So, are we going to stand around out here all night?” asked Tonks with a slight pout before she started laughing at the two sheepish looking wizards and heading up the path and towards the Burrow.

“Sorry,” they called in unison as they quickly caught up to the young metamorph and continued up the path in relative quiet, each seemingly lost in their own thoughts.

“Harry!” shouted Ron in the distance, running to meet up with the approaching trio, followed closely by Ginny, Hermione, and the twins.

“Hey Ron,” greeted Harry happily to his still taller and even lankier best mate as they awkwardly shook hands for a short second before he was seemingly tackled by a blur of bushy brown hair.

“Harry, it’s so good to see you,” squealed Hermione as she smothered the longer haired, taller and more muscular boy than she remembered with a Molly Weasley-like hug.

“Hey ‘Mione, when did you get here?” replied Harry with a chuckle at one of his best friend’s antics, as well as the faces and gestures being made by the approaching twins.

“My parents and I arrived here this morning,” she replied eagerly and with a happy smile that revealed the clean white teeth of the Dentists’ daughter.

“Brilliant,” responded Harry before turning to face the last three approaching teens. “Hi Ginny, Gred, Forge ...it’s good to see you all.”

“Thanks ...you too Har-,” started Ginny before being pushed out of her twin brothers’ way as they approached their primary investor.

“It’s absolutely wonderful to see you,” started one of them.

“My how you’ve grown young Harry,” continued the other, who he thought was Fred but wasn’t positive.

“Harry old chap, old man,” added the other in their usual confusing twin speak as they both came up on either side of him and ruffled his currently tied back hair.

“What have you been up to this summer?” they finished in unison.

“Lazying around, as per usual,” Harry replied dramatically, getting a snort of laughter from Tonks and a smile from Bill.

“It is really good to see you Harry,” spoke up Ginny over the antics of her two brothers who were just about to launch into another lengthy twin diatribe as she too approached him and gave him a tentative hug.

“You too Gin,” responded Harry as he returned the younger redhead’s hug somewhat awkwardly having never really got too close to the girl who had crushed on him for so long, but still considered a friend.

“Be careful with my sister, Potter,” threatened Bill teasingly, causing Ginny to blush and Harry to glare back at the eldest Weasley sibling before a smirk made it to his face.

“Or you’ll do what Jill? Defend her honor?” taunted Harry back, causing all the teens to gasp in surprise at the challenging tone that sounded so much like their brother Charlie, and Bill to glare back at the-Boy-Who-Lived menacingly sending Tonks into a fit of giggles as Harry simply smirked greater in response to Bill’s glare.

“You better watch it Pothead,” sneered Bill mockingly as the two almost seemed poised to face off against one another until they both started to join in Tonks’ laughter which had now gotten quite out of control at the show the two ‘boys’ were putting on, confusing the hell out of the rest of those present.

“Oh Harry ...you’re here, good,” exclaimed Molly Weasley happily as she met the group after hearing all the laughter and rushing out to give Harry his third hug in as many minutes before leading everyone back into the house and towards the kitchen where dinner was no doubt waiting to be served.



“Hi Mrs. Weasley,” mumbled Harry into the woman’s shoulder as she squeezed him heartily before being lead to the kitchen for dinner with everyone else following up behind them.

“Harry, let’s go put you’re things upstairs,” started Ron eager to save Harry from his mother and get a chance to talk to him alone before everybody sits down to eat.

“You boys better hurry, dinner will be ready in a few short minutes,” replied Molly authoritatively.

Harry agreed, and quickly followed Ron up to the topmost floor of the Burrow, where he was led into the bright orange bedroom of his best mate and the Chudley Cannons biggest fan. The room seemed the same as always, with Quidditch posters lining the walls, clothes on the floor, and colors so bright it sometimes made your head hurt. The only noticeable difference was the lack of the spare bed that Harry usually slept on while he was here, causing his face to scrunch in confusion and look to Ron questioningly.

“Where’s my bed?” he asked dumbly, still utterly confused as to what was going on.

“Oh ...mum said you could have Charlie’s room since you’ll be here the rest of the summer. The Granger’s are staying in Percy’s room ‘cause it’s the cleanest,” responded Ron nonchalantly, and with something else clearly on his mind as he was more than a little distracted. “Actually Harry, I-I ...I need your help.”

“With what?” asked Harry curiously, wondering what had Ron thinking so hard and acting so serious?

“It’s ...well ...um,” started Ron dumbly and embarrassed for some reason.

“Hermione?” offered Harry with a slight chuckle knowing the only thing that could get to Ron that much or get his Weasley blush working that hard, and being confirmed when Ron’s head snapped up and he was looking every bit the lost puppy he felt like.

"H-How?" stuttered Ron as the tips of his ears and face became an even brighter flushed red as he stared at his best mate in shock.

"Don't worry Ron. I've known you two have liked each other for ages now. At least since the Yule Ball in fourth year ...it's alright with me," offered Harry easily and with a large grin on his face, hoping to erase some of his mate's fears and get to the heart of this conversation so he could catch a quick shower before dinner.

"What ...wait ...like each other ...you mean ...Hermione I-likes ...m-me?" stuttered Ron in absolute disbelief.

"Ron, it's so obvious ...everyone in Gryffindor knows. I think it's brilliant, you should tell her how you feel," replied Harry still grinning and trying to encourage his friend to finally make his move.

"You really think I should?" asked a still uncertain redhead.

"Yes, and you better do it before we go back to school and someone else beats you to it," added Harry smartly, and watched as Ron got a far away look in his chocolate eyes probably dreaming about 'his Mione' if the look on his face was anything to go by. "Now, how about you show me to Charlie's room so I can unload my trunk, take a shower, and let you get back to daydreaming about a certain bookworm."

"Mum said that dinner would be ready soon," replied Ron after finally snapping back into reality and giving his mate a nod before leading him to his older brother's room the floor below across from the twins habitat.

Entering the normal sized dragon decorated room for probably the first time since he first was introduced to the Burrow, Harry looked around with an amused grin as he realized how obsessed with dragons the second oldest Weasley sibling was. Harry pulled out his shrunken trunk and placed it at the foot of the full size bed before tapping it with his wand to enlarge it to its normal size. He told Ron who asked about his new trunk that it was a multi-compartment model that he would show everyone after dinner. He then told Ron

that he was taking a quick shower before dinner since he was still sweaty from his martial arts class, and grabbed his bathroom gear and left the room.

Harry stood under the shower on the second floor bathroom for a short while, letting the scalding water relax his sore bones and muscles. He still had mixed emotions about being at the Burrow and around so many people, not because he didn't like it there or like them, but just knowing how much harder it made spending time with Tonks, not to mention his continued training, although which he felt worse about he wouldn't admit to himself. He eventually returned to his new bedroom, filled with several bookshelves and dragon statues, and posters of Dragons flying around breathing fire from one to the next. He quietly got dressed into a pair of comfortable linen slacks and a white t-shirt before heading downstairs to the kitchen, having just heard her yelling at the twins for doing something while they set the table.

"Harry old pal," started George jokingly as he emerged downstairs in the noisy kitchen.

"Did you enjoy your swim?" finished Fred sarcastically.

"You were in there for a while," continued George.

"We thought you might have drowned," seconded Fred.

"Or at least have a problem," added George.

"Trying to get out," finished Fred.

"No such luck gentlemen," responded Harry with a smirk, "that pesky trap you put on the door was easily dispelled. I would have thought you guys were smarter than that."

"How did you know about that?" they both replied in stereo, causing a slight chuckle to escape Harry's lips.

"Sorry, that's for me to know and you to wonder about," whispered the dark haired teenager with a snigger as his eyes met those of the twins challengingly.

"Harry, its so nice to have you here," spoke Molly Weasley the next moment as he stepped up to the kitchen table as she rushed forward to give him a hug and then directed him to an empty seat between Tonks and Ron, who were talking to Ginny and Hermione respectively.

"Thank you Mrs. Weasley," responded Harry politely as he sat with everyone else at the large dinner table waiting for the feast to begin and gave the kind matron a large smile as he watched Fred and George whispering conspiratorially behind her.

"And you two," she snapped as she spun on the spot and pinned her two most troublesome children with her hard glare and finger to their faces, "better behave and not bother Harry while he's here is that understood."

"Yes mum," they mumbled in unison.

"Good," she responded happily, "now let's eat, dinner is ready."

Harry was happy to see that Tonks had been asked to stay for dinner, and took great pleasure in making sure their legs kept bumping into each others, and occasionally their hands under the table as dinner was served and dug into. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, were at the far end of the table entertaining Hermione's parents, with Hermione adding into their conversation every now and then from her spot between her mum and Tonks. The twins were trying to put as much room as they could from their mum, and kept getting closer to Ron who was too busy eating to notice, while Ginny and Bill talked mostly with Harry and Tonks at their end of the full wooden table.

"So Harry, tell us," spoke Fred loudly well into dinner and in a theatrical enough manner, that said Harry was a little worried what he got himself into by teasing them on their failed prank, but looked on with amusement none the less.

“What have you been doing with yourself this summer?” continued George in their customary and sometimes difficult to understand, twins speak although it was easier because they were next to each other instead of sandwiching him like usual.

“Because you don’t seem all skinny like normal,” added Fred.

“And you finally got a new hairstyle,” again George.

“And even new glasses and clothes,” spoke Fred.

“And you can do magic,” they finished together triumphantly.

“Um ...I exercised ...and ate properly for once,” replied Harry somewhat sheepishly, not really that comfortable just telling everybody all about his summer since it would only lead to questions of how it got to that point. He also completely ignored the magic question but wasn’t called on it when Ron interrupted his inquisition with a better proposal.

“Do you want to play some quidditch tomorrow, its getting too late for tonight, but maybe we can go for a short fly after dinner?” asked Ron as he was slowly coming to a finish with his dinner.

“Did you get your Firebolt back?” asked Hermione curiously, and ending her conversation with her mum to hear his reply.

“Yeah, I did ...but I retired the Firebolt,” replied Harry somberly, not wanting to get into his reasons in front of everybody.

“WHAT!” shouted a tactless Ron with a mouthful of food that sprayed out before him, “but that’s the best broom in the world?”

“Yeah ...and the first gift Sirius ever gave me,” answered Harry quietly and bringing the noise at the table to an immediate standstill.

“...oh,” breathed several of those present silently, not knowing how Harry would react to talk about Sirius after his moodiness last year, and then understanding his reasons instantly.

“So what are you going to fly now?” asked Bill honestly, breaking some of the tension that had settled over the crowded kitchen.

“I got a used Nimbus 2000 last week,” responded Harry thankfully, grateful to Bill for steering the conversation away from Sirius.

“Why not get a new Nimbus 2001?” asked a perplexed Ron. “I was going to get one, but Mum won’t let us spend our money until we are finished with school.”

“Because Malfoy ruined the 2001 design for me ...I loved my first Nimbus, and I want to see his face when I still beat him, even with an older broom,” finished Harry with a mischievous smile on his face that did not go unnoticed by many in the room.

“That’s brilliant,” exclaimed the twins as equally mischievous grins erupted onto their faces as well making most in the room who knew what they were capable of slightly scared for what they had in mind.

“I hope that means you’re coming back as seeker, cause I wanted to play chaser this year,” added Ginny happily.

“If you’re sure you’re okay with it?” questioned Harry.

“Of course,” responded Ginny quickly, “I never really liked playing seeker, there’s not enough to do most of time.”

“Yeah, only win the match,” replied Harry sarcastically to a few giggles around the table. “I think you’ll make a great chaser Ginny ...good luck.”

“Thanks Harry,” responded Ginny warmly as the famous Weasley blush tinged her cheeks and ears at Harry’s praise, earning a few chuckles from her brothers and Harry a glare from Tonks.

“Harry,” called Hermione, “are you still dropping Divination this year?”

“Of course ...it’s a total waste of time ...like I want to have my death predicted every week ...its total bollocks,” answered an indignant green eyed teenager.

“Harry language,” scolded Hermione, Molly, and Emma Granger simultaneously, as Harry ducked his head and mumbled a quiet apology.

“But it’s such an easy class,” continued Ron in slight confusion.

“Yeah ...cause it’s useless ...any other class would be better and more helpful,” responded Harry evenly, ignoring the looks of shock on Ron’s, Hermione’s, and the twins’ faces.

“What would you take instead?” asked Arthur curiously, entering the conversation as both Hermione and Ron were trying to get over the shock of seeing a completely different side of Harry than they had ever seen. For Hermione, it was music to her ears, while she knew it probably sounded more like doom to Ron, and couldn’t seem to understand why Harry was all of a sudden motivated to study and take classes more seriously, but figured her explanation would come eventually.

“Well, I’d like to take Ancient Runes, but I don’t know if they would let me in that class,” answered Harry hesitantly, garnering several smiles from Bill, Arthur, Tonks, Ginny, and even a slightly confused Hermione.

“Do you even know anything about Runes?” asked Hermione, just breaking out of her shock enough to start asking questions.

“Sure,” answered Harry, who just pulled out his wand in a flash and drew a quick Runic symbol right above Ron’s dinner plate next to him, causing it to glow light blue for only a second as the Rune triggered and a confused Ron looked around to find out the spells affect.

“Ahhh,” yelped the gangly redhead as he jumped from his chair a second later at the sight of all of his skin on his arms had turned an electric blue to match his face and hair, amidst many chuckles from those who witnessed the scene. “What did you do to me?”

“Relax Ron ...here,” and with another small runic design, Harry returned his best mate to normal a second later, just in time to hear Hermione’s outraged cry.

“HARRY JAMES POTTER, what are you doing!? Are you trying to get expelled or arrested for underage magic?” she huffed in a combination of outrage and fear of getting caught.

“Relax Mione,” started Harry calmly as he locked eyes with his brown eyed bushy haired friend, “the Ministry can’t track me anymore.”

“How Harry, I thought that was only at Privet Drive?” asked a slightly confused Bill.

“Actually, the location sensors do still pick up the magic, but it no longer matches my magical signature on record at the Ministry, since it has been altered so much this summer,” answered Harry honestly, and knowing his explanation would only lead to more questions, and he wasn’t disappointed.

“How exactly did you alter your magical signature?” asked Hermione in bewilderment. “I’ve never read about anything like it.”

“Books don’t know everything Hermione,” answered Harry honestly, “but it basically comes down to trading out Voldemort’s magic for Sirius’.”

“What?!” gasped his bookworm best friend.

“I was adopted by Sirius in blood and magic, and that was after I had purged my own magic clean from the taint of Voldemort,” responded Harry to the shocked silent group around him. “So likewise, my magical signature has changed significantly since school ended, and the Ministry is none the wiser.”

“That’s brilliant Harry,” echoed the twins in awe, as Ron, Ginny, and Hermione gave him slightly jealous stares, but seemed to accept his answer without complaint.



“So are you going to try to take the Ancient Runes OWL now, you probably still have time, or just go and join the fifth year class next term?” asked Bill, trying to get to the original topic of discussion.

“Wait, that’s my class,” exclaimed Ginny as a large smile dominated her young freckled face.

“Really, you’re taking Ancient Runes?” asked Harry, glad to have someone else besides Hermione to try and get him caught up. He never could seem to learn well from Hermione’s way of teaching things, since she was so into the book method, and Harry played it more by feel and intuition, he often struggled when trying to learn new spells from her.

“Yeah, it’s one of my best classes,” she replied happily.

“Do you think you could help me catch up to your class? That’s probably where they would put me if they let me change, and I am nowhere near ready to take the OWL now,” responded Harry eagerly.

“Sure,” added Ginny excitedly, garnering another glare and this time an indignant huff from Tonks next to him that he was slowly starting to figure out the reason for.

“So you’ve really been studying all summer?” asked Ron confused as to why his best mate would want to act like a Ravenclaw, “you sound just like Hermione, what happened to you?”

“What happened?” snapped Harry coming to the end of his short rope as he glared at the clueless redhead next to him in utter disbelief. “Sirius died ...Voldemort happened!”

All noise in the kitchen came to an abrupt halt at first Harry’s rise in anger, and then his words. Everyone knew how tough it must have been for him to lose Sirius, they all missed him as well, but none would trade with Harry. They looked at him with a little fear, probably because of the slight rise in magic that his body almost seemed to be emitting subconsciously, and also with questions that they knew now was not the time to ask. Only Tonks, and to a lesser extent, Bill seemed to be immune from the affects of Harry’s magic, and were

able to calm the young wizard down relatively easily. Despite all the Occlumency in the world, it was still tough to think about Sirius, that night in the Department of Mysteries, being possessed by Voldemort, or the prophetic revelation later in the evening, but Harry just wasn't the type of person to share his thoughts with everybody.

"Look ...I'm sorry everyone, I shouldn't of snapped at any of you," apologized Harry guiltily. "I just can't keep relying on luck to escape Him ...at some point that luck will run out, and I intend to be as prepared as I can for when that happens."

"That's solid thinking Harry," replied Bill thoughtfully, one of the two people at the table who knew more than the others about what Harry had been up to so far this summer, and agreed whole heartily with the teenager's thoughts.

"Mad Eye would be proud," sniggered the twins in unison, helping to break more of the tension in the room successfully.

"Yeah ...but studying over summer holiday," replied Ron in turmoil as if he could think of nothing worse, still trying to wrap his mind around Harry's sudden drive to learn.

"I couldn't do much else Ron, I wasn't really allowed to leave my relative's property," replied Harry, who gave an inconspicuous wink to Tonks, to which she replied with a tiny grin just for him.

"But Bill said you go to some marital arts class everyday in London," continued Ron somewhat accusingly, but mainly just curious.

"That's martial arts, and yes I do now go to that class everyday, but that's only been the case for a little over a week so far," added Harry with a slight chuckle at Ron's butchering of all things muggle that was joined by the Granger's and Tonks.

"So what is 'martial arts'?" asked George.

"Yeah, can we come to see it?" continued Fred.

"If it's alright with your parents, you could come watch a class, or come to this weekend's mixed martial arts tournament ...I have to go and watch some of it for class, and it's only a few miles from the dojo," finished Harry somewhat excitedly about having a lot of company to join him and Malcolm at the tournament.

"What's a dojo?" asked Ginny curiously, glancing between Harry and Tonks, figuring they would be the best bet for an answer.

"It's just the building my class is in, kind of like a large practice room," replied Harry easily and quickly.

"Can we go this weekend, Mum?" asked Ron excitedly, knowing she would have a harder time saying no in front of everyone else.

"I guess it's alright with me, but the decision lies with Tonks. Since she is the one taking Harry there, and would be in charge of you lot, the decision is hers," spoke Molly with a stern glare directed at her children.

"Well Tonks?" began George eagerly.

"Oh wonderful," started Fred.

"Smart and funny," continued George.

"Law abiding auror," added Fred smoothly.

"Our beautiful protector," stated George dramatically.

"What do you say?" asked the eager Fred.

"Can we all come?" asked the equally eager George a second later.

"Yes, you can all come, as long as you follow my rules," spoke Tonks with a no nonsense edge to her voice as she directed her gaze at the dramatic duo, who seemed completely unphased with her demands.

"Aye aye," started Fred pompously.

“Captain Tonks,” finished George as both twins gave mock salutes to the young metamorph auror, who merely shook her head at their antics and held their gaze throughout.

“I mean it you two, you will follow my rules or I’ll stun you myself and send you back here to answer to your mother without a second thought,” responded Tonks imposingly, making the two twins under her gaze to gulp audibly and nod at the seriousness of her threat, something they previously wouldn’t have thought the fun loving auror capable of, nor did they want to test her resolve.

“Good,” started Molly Weasley happily, “now that that’s settled, who’s ready for dessert?”

“Yes,” chorused Ron and Bill, both with large smiles and glossed over happy looks on their freckled faces causing Harry to let out a loud chuckle at the Weasley boys’ appetites, and everyone else to snicker softly.

“Watch it there, Potter. Just because you know ‘jujy sue,’ doesn’t mean I can’t curse you blue again,” mock threatened Bill as he sent a glare towards the still laughing younger black haired wizard.

“Its j-u-j-i-t-s-u,” laughed Harry uproariously as he struggled to breath and slowly pronounce the martial arts form he now studied, “and I’ve got something for you the next time you try cursing me blue.”

“Is that so Harriet?” sneered Bill amidst the gasps from those around them who were unaccustomed to the banter and teasing that usually went on between the two.

“Yes, actually it is Billius,” retorted Harry back playfully.

“Alright Potter, you and me in the back garden ...you got ten minutes so start praying,” growled back Bill to the now many nervous and confused faces at the table, including Tonks who still did not know the type of relationship Harry had formed with the older curse breaker over the summer.

“Billius Alexander Weasley, what has gotten in to you?” scolded Molly almost hysterically as she shot her son and disapproving glare.

“Relax mum, Harry and I are just having some fun ...right Potter?” continued Bill calmly.

“Well ...at least I'll be having some fun when I curse you into embarrassment Billius,” laughed back Harry.

This sent both Tonks and Ginny into hysterical giggling fits at the two wizards' antics, and the confusion it seemed to cause everyone else. The twins were caught between shock and pride staring between two of the very few wizards they actually looked up to, and were still confused who exactly they should be rooting for. Molly and Arthur just looked on the whole thing in disapproval, while Hermione's parents, Dan and Emma Granger, looked completely lost.

Hermione herself was totally unsure of what Harry was doing and who he had become this summer. She figured it was a defense mechanism so that he didn't have to deal with talking about Sirius, and it slightly unsettled her. Sure he always said he was fine and had again said as much during this summer's letters, but this level of acceptance and peace that Harry showed she didn't think could be real since he hadn't yet talked to her and Ron about it. Ron's reaction however, was the best. He was looking at his older brother fearfully knowing that none of his siblings had ever come close to beating him in any duel, while looking at Harry with slight awe at his cavalier attitude in taking on Bill when he knew he couldn't possibly have a chance.

“Harry, are you sure about this? Bill tends to really embarrass those he duels against, just ask Charlie or the twins,” spoke Ron in what he hoped was a reassuring voice after finally breaking out of shock at what was happening.

“Relax Ron, we've dueled before ...and I know exactly what he is capable of,” answered Harry honestly and calmly to his best mate, completely unafraid of losing to Bill and actually looking forward to getting his chance of revenge.

"It's your decision Harry, but I think you should reconsider, Bill never loses," responded Ron fearfully.

"Oh ...well he is going to lose tonight," replied Harry with a mischievous smile on his face and sparkle to his eyes that shown through his new glasses clearer, an advantage he was definitely going to take in dueling the older curse breaker.

Harry closed his eyes for a moment, and retreated to his mind where he was able to quickly go over his previous duels with Bill, looking for commonalities and tendencies that he might be able to exploit. Now, with the added benefit of his new glasses, he knew that he would be able to give the usually very elusive eldest Weasley a better run for his money. Several minutes later, and the group around the table had finished dessert and went out to the back garden to watch the upcoming duel. Arthur Weasley worriedly led out a very excited Dan and Emma Granger, who were intrigued to see a real magical duel since their daughter wasn't legally allowed to perform magic yet, while his wife stayed behind in the kitchen to clean up while clucking her disapproval.

Harry and Bill both walked purposely out past the garden where all the spectators took seats, and Arthur set up a clear protective barrier between them and the two preparing duelers. This time, when the duel began, Harry never lost sight of his target thanks to the aura reading charm on his glasses, despite the fact that most of the audience did. He was able to follow the older curse breaker's every movement and also spot the Runes and spells that were attempted to be used against him with little success. As Bill's frustration at always being found out and a step behind mounted, he started to get more and more reckless. Abandoning his stealth tactics until he was just raining down spells on the younger wizard who seemed nearly impossible to hit.

Harry continued almost solely on the defensive when Bill abandoned fighting from the shadows, and was blocking and dodging spells at an incredible speed as he slowly worked his way to the far edge of the garden to implement his plan. It was minutes later that Bill fired two longer tied together Runes that gave Harry the time to cast the area fog spell that Bill had used at the beginning of the duel and every time

the two fought. He used the fog as cover as he continued to work around the garden, quickly performing spells all around him that he hoped would lead him to victory.

Bill countered the fog with a powerful air spell that quickly started dispersing the thick fog cover as Harry finished with the last of his preparations. When the fog did finally clear, Bill was completely surrounded by ten goblin sized garden gnomes, decked out in full goblin armor and holding the human Gringott's employee at several spear points. Bill's eyes widened for a split second in shock and confusion, giving Harry all the time he needed to strike with the perfect charmed transfiguration spell from behind the circle of armed garden gnomes. Bill turned just in time to be hit dead on with the spell, and cringed, waiting for it to take effect as his wand flew out of his hand. When nothing seemed to happen, he quickly glanced around him to find a snickering Harry holding him at double wand point.

"Do you yield ...Bozo?" asked Harry mockingly, trying desperately to contain his laughter as he looked over his opponent's new attire happily.

"You will pay for this Potter," came the girly squeal of the clown as he tried to threaten his attacker before realizing the outfit went much further than he originally thought, and he was still surrounded at spear point by ten oversized garden gnomes.

"Is that a yes?" asked Harry sweetly.

"Yes, I yield ...now get rid of these gnomes," he tried to snarl imposingly, but with little affect with his voice and outfit.

"Sure Bozo ...finite," responded Harry with a dramatic wave of his wand, returning the little garden gnomes to their rightful size and attire before they scampered away from the dark haired wizard as quick as their little legs would carry them.

"Now change me back," shouted Bill exasperatedly as the laughter and jeering of his siblings grew closer to the still heavily breathing duelists at the garden's edge.

“No chance ...you left me blue for an hour,” responded Harry with a large smile on his sweaty face.

“OH!” started George.

“MY!” added Fred.

“GOD!” chorused the four youngest Weasley children as they approached and got an up close look at their eldest brother dressed in oversized patched overalls, rainbow colored shirt, enormous red shoes, and a white painted face complete with a puffy red nose and sad red painted mouth.

Click.

“Okay Harry, I’ve got your picture ...you can change him back,” spoke Tonks as she appeared next to Harry with an equally large smile and smoking camera in her hands.

“Picture?” gasped Bill in horror.

“How else was I going to show Charlie?” questioned Harry sarcastically to the now even wider eyed curse breaker.

“No, Harry please ...you can’t show it to Charlie ...I’ll never live it down,” he blurted pleadingly as everyone just continued laughing at his appearance and predicament, while Harry just smirked triumphantly.

“On the condition that you continue teaching me spells, and practice with me on Sundays,” stated Harry easily.

“Anything, you’ve got it ...just change me back please,” whined Bill quickly and with a great sense of relief despite his girlish voice.

“Deal ...glamorous finite,” replied Harry with another wave of his wand, removing the advanced personalized clown glamour charm and returning Bill to his previous appearance amidst the groans of displeasure from the other Weasley siblings and a sigh of relief from the eldest.



“Why did you let him off so easily?” asked Fred.

“Yeah, you should have made him suffer more,” added George.

“Yeah, Bill is the worst winner, you should have celebrated it longer,” whined Ron, not happy that his brother was let off the hook so easily.

“I don’t have to humiliate Bill to celebrate the victory,” started Harry nonchalantly, “and besides, I did get lucky ...and have been dueling Bill enough to have a good idea of what he was going to try. Tonks taught me the glamour charm this summer, and I thought it would be a good way to get him back for turning me blue in almost every duel we’ve had,” he finished to the happy smiles of Bill and Tonks which he gladly returned.

“You were brilliant Harry,” whispered Ginny somewhat shyly as the group slowly started making their way to the back porch and the rest of the spectators.

“Yeah you were Harry,” agreed Hermione, whose parents were still staring open mouthed at what they had just seen.

“Thanks,” he responded with a happy smile, glad to be back amongst friends and at the Burrow even though he greatly missed the privacy he shared with Tonks at his apartment on Privet Drive, a desire that was greatly tested whenever their eyes met.

“Okay folks, it’s getting late, we should head inside before mum comes out to call us,” spoke Bill knowingly.

“Yeah, I wanted to see if there’s any dessert left,” answered Harry as he and Bill walked next to each other back into the house.

“I still don’t know how you beat me. I couldn’t hide from you anywhere, you always seemed to know where I was and what I was preparing ...it was rather frustrating,” replied Bill exasperatedly, but in much better spirits than a few minutes ago after losing to a teenager.

"Yeah, Tonks has been complaining about the same thing," replied Harry as he glanced behind him to see Tonks with Ginny and Hermione whispering and giggling with one another.

"I wasn't complaining," started Bill.

"It's about time you all returned, it's getting dark," spoke Molly warningly as she greeted everyone upon entering from the back garden.

"Hey Harry, want to play of game of chess?" asked Ron as he went and plopped down on the comfortable sofa of the living room hoping to keep busy.

"I thought that maybe I could give you all a tour of my new trunk," responded Harry as he smiled widely at the many occupants of the room.

"What's so special about a new trunk?" asked Hermione curiously as she watched Ron eagerly leap off the sofa preparing to head upstairs.

"You'll see," winked Harry mischievously towards the always curious bookworm, "come on."

Once everyone had gathered around the trunk in Charlie's room, Harry placed his hand on the small circle upon its beautifully crafted top. Asking only to open the first then second compartments, Harry showed the basic expansion capabilities of the two standard compartments filled currently with his clothes, school stuff, and even some exercise equipment from his old training room. Wanting to make Hermione wait to the end, Harry then opened the third compartment and the small potions laboratory which everyone went down into much to the twins delight. Then Harry opened the fourth compartment from the doorway that connected them, leading everyone into the last compartment he was willing to show everybody, the library.

"Wow ...where did you get all of these books?" asked Hermione who had instantly gone to the only set of shelves that were currently filled, and began scanning the titles reverently.

"Most of them are from Flourish and Blotts from a week ago," answered Harry easily, laughing to himself at his friend's look of awe and desire.

"But there's almost a hundred books here ...it must have cost a fortune," she exclaimed while still searching through them.

"Not as much as they probably should have," he responded sadly. "In fact ...I probably could have gotten them for even less had I wanted to haggle ...with business the way it is."

"You can say that mate," started Fred.

"Almost all our sales are coming from Owl Order," continued George.

"We rarely have more than a handful of shoppers these days," added Fred.

"The Alley is just so desolate," supplied George, "it's sad."

"Yeah, it was pretty dead when I was there too," responded Harry. "So Hermione, what did you pick out? I should probably tell you now that you can only borrow one book at a time."

"What?" snapped Hermione defensively as she looked at the small pile she had already been collecting with a calculating stare? "Fine ...I'll just borrow this one called Household Charms and Transfigurations for now."

"Sure, I might even be able to help you with some of them, or Tonks might if you ask nicely ...she's a great teacher, especially with all the transfiguration stuff," responded Harry honestly and receiving a small mischievous smile from the nearby pink haired metamorph.

"Yeah ...well we can't all be gifted with charms, Harry," teased back Tonks with a happy smile that Harry had to fight real hard not to just kiss right off her face then and there, so settled for returning the teasing.

"No ...I guess you can't," breathed out Harry dramatically, followed by a slight chuckle at everyone's looks of shock at his reply.

"Real modest that one," teased Tonks laughingly.

"So, have you already read this Harry?" asked Hermione uncertainly after Harry's unusual display of sarcasm and if she didn't know any better, flirting.

"No, but I've learned quite a bit about it. Tonks taught me when we redecorated my room at Privet Drive into a brilliant flat," replied Harry easily and with a hidden wink at the metamorph auror who smiled knowingly in return.

"That's quite the trunk Harry," spoke Bill in fascination as the group slowly made their way back up the ladder and into Charlie's old room, where he wondered about getting himself something similar, but not wanting to talk too much about it in front of his brothers.

"Thanks Bill," smiled back Harry. "I really needed something big, since everything I own I carry in my trunk. My old trunk just couldn't hold all the stuff I've accumulated, but it's still in good condition if any of you need a new school trunk, you're welcome to it."

"Really?" asked a bright eyed Ginny, "mine's falling apart ...it used to be my Great Aunt Gertrude's, I would love a newer one."

"Brilliant, I'll clean it out for you tomorrow," he responded bringing a large smile to the youngest Weasley's face making Harry happy for offering it up to his friends.

"Why don't we go have that game of chess now, Harry?" Ron asked his best friend eagerly; glad to have his friends around him for the rest of the summer.

"Alright Ron," responded Harry after sharing a quick look with Tonks that went unseen to the others who started heading back downstairs to the Burrow's living room.

“Hey Harry, before you go can we talk about your new workout and training schedule? I have to leave soon,” asked Tonks expertly as everyone was reaching the stairs, giving the two the excuse they needed to be alone for a few minutes.

“Sure Tonks,” answered Harry flatly, trying to suppress the joy that was growing inside him. “I’ll be right down Ron,” he called out to the others who continued on their way to the living room.

“Thanks Dora,” started Harry as soon as the pair was left alone and went back to his bedroom, where they were kissing passionately before the door was even completely closed. It took several minutes until they reluctantly broke apart for air, and after a small chaste kiss they promised to see each other bright and early tomorrow morning and said their goodbye’s for the night.

“Come on Harry ...it’s your move,” spoke Ron over an hour later, bringing Harry out of his Tonks induced reverie and back to the present game of chess, which he already knew he would loose in just six more moves.

Harry was really enjoying just hanging out with Ron playing chess, even if he knew he would always loose. Hermione and Ginny were both reading nearby, and occasionally offering a little bit of advice to Harry, who listened more often than not since his own moves would have probably turned out worse. He was a little worried about how he would fair the rest of the summer, since having his friends around was going to severely slow down his own training, and be detrimental to his new and growing relationship with Tonks.

Harry was lying in Charlie’s bed later that night after everyone else had gone to bed and he was still restless, reading through his NEWT Transfiguration textbook. He had almost finished by the time he was tiring and ready for bed, and after organizing his thoughts for the day and clearing his mind, he fell into a relatively peaceful but lonely sleep. Dreaming of nights when he and Tonks could sleep together without arousing suspicion like they were at Privet Drive, and hoping that his bed wouldn’t be so empty for the rest of the summer at the Burrow.

Harry was awake before dawn on Friday morning, now just three days until his birthday, and after slipping on some shorts and his trainers, he made his way downstairs and out the Burrow's back door. He ran for over two hours around the property and ward perimeter, greatly enjoying the different environment and scenery from the paved streets of Little Winging. Returning to the house a little after seven, Harry could already hear movement in the Burrow's kitchen, and decided to sneak upstairs unnoticed before entering his tent inside the fifth compartment of his trunk to finish his workout.

The rest of the workout wasn't long, and after a refreshing shower in his tent's private bathroom, he returned to his room and got dressed. He put on some blue and silver summer shorts and a tight silver t-shirt with the words 'it's magic' on the front before heading downstairs for breakfast. He entered the kitchen just before nine to find Mrs. Weasley serving breakfast to Hermione and her parents, who seemed to be enjoying a quite morning drinking tea and coffee while waiting for the rest of the house to wake, and each reading something of their own. Dan was reading the London Times Business Section, while Emma had the crossword puzzle half filled out and Hermione had her nose buried in the book she borrowed from Harry just last night.

"Good morning," he replied cheerfully to the quiet room, startling them into action, or more specifically Molly Weasley, who immediately began filling Harry a large plate of the breakfast she had just finished dishing out to the others.

"What are you doing up so early?" asked Hermione in slight confusion, not remembering Harry being much of a morning person in summers past, or ever being that awake and even chipper.

"Early?" asked Harry in confusion, "I've been up since five."

"Why ...couldn't you sleep?" asked the now worried Hermione as she thought about the nightmares that usually plagued her best friend and all the pain he must be dealing with now.

"No, I slept fine. I've been getting up early all summer to run," responded Harry with a smile as he dug into the large breakfast before him eagerly.

"You run every morning? How far?" she asked as her father's head perked up from his Newspaper at the topic.

"I don't really keep track ...let's just say I finished seven laps around the Burrow's ward lines in just over two hours," answered Harry thoughtfully as he tried to remember just how far and long he ran for.

"What! That's got to be over twenty kilometers," shouted Hermione after some quick math in her head as she stared open mouthed at one of her best friends that had changed so much in the month and a half since she had last seen him.

"Maybe," started Harry completely unaffected by the girl's outburst, "I just run until I can't ...and two hours is usually my max."

"That's quite good Harry," spoke Dan Granger in slight awe at what that amount of running would be like, he was glad to jog for twenty minutes if he was lucky.

"Thank you sir," replied Harry politely and somewhat shyly.

"Harry, I told you ...none of this sir business ...please just call me Dan," he replied to the young wizard that seemed so different from any teenager he had ever met. Hermione had always described Ron and Harry as somewhat lazy, but with a pension to get into trouble. And after spending time around Ron these last two days he could tell exactly what his daughter was seeing, but when it came to Harry, he was not at all what he expected or remembered from the brief time they met after their third year.

Dan didn't know how else to describe it, but to say that Harry was a grown up. Yes, he acted a little silly, sarcastic, or stubborn at times like all teenagers, but when you looked in his eyes or remained in his presence for any amount of time, you just knew. Here was someone, who had seen and done so much already in their short life, and even with only the few stories of his adventures that Hermione had felt safe

telling him, he felt the young wizard's maturity and saw a determination in his eyes and body language that he had rarely if ever seen. This young man had earned the right to call him Dan, he could tell just from being around the famous wizard that he had a character that spoke volumes about the type of person he was, and the values he held.

"Alright ...D-Dan, I'll try," replied Harry awkwardly, but with a friendly smile on his face as he continued to put away his breakfast at a rate that made Mrs. Weasley proud and only pile more onto his plate.

Harry didn't really know what to think of Hermione's parents, they were both super nice don't get him wrong, but they were the type of people that you could tell had not been through much adversity. They seemed to have led a pretty sheltered and proper life with little turmoil, the type of people the Dursleys always wished themselves to be ...normal. Hermione being a witch was probably the single most unique or extraordinary thing that happened in their more mundane, not dull lives. Harry would have given anything to have grown up under their care, his life would be practically unrecognizable from what it was now, but he didn't think he could trade even if he wanted to.

When he had first heard the Prophecy and that it could also have been Neville, he had dreamed of how great that would have been to switch places with his fellow Gryffindor dorm mate. At least he could see and visit his parents, and despite her harsh exterior, he felt Augusta 'Gran' Longbottom to have been much more preferable than the Dursleys. But those thoughts, always made him feel worse about himself and his own situation; he could never wish the pain and torment he had suffered through on Neville. Despite his own desires to flee from the contents of the Prophecy or wish that it didn't affect him so, he knew that it was his cross to bear, and he wouldn't even have wished it on anyone ...well, maybe Voldemort.

His life may have been difficult, or down right torture depending on how you saw it, but it was his. It had made him who he was now, and he wouldn't change that. Yes, he would have loved to have grown up with his parents and Sirius away from this war, but that wasn't reality. He had been dealt a certain hand, and felt now that he had been



playing it out to the very best of his ability, and couldn't really ask for more than that. He started to wonder just how much of this new perspective and understanding had come with the arrival of Tonks, and as he sat and ate a wonderful breakfast, his thoughts spiraled to all the breakfasts he shared with her.

Harry immediately started thinking about the happy auror and what she was doing for morning meals especially now that he wasn't cooking them all for her. He also found himself missing her company very much, not to mention her comforting presence in his bed at nights. He let out an extended sigh as he broke his automatic eating to reminisce about their time spent alone together this summer, and especially this past week.

"Are you alright Harry?" asked a concerned Hermione as she heard his sigh and thought he might want to talk about what he was thinking and feeling now, but not wanted to pressure him too much as was her tendency.

"Oh yeah ...I was just thinking," lied Harry absentmindedly before continuing his attack on breakfast and completely missing his bushy haired friend's sympathetic look, figuring he was thinking about Sirius, but not having the heart to bring it up.

"Wotcher folks," spoke Tonks as she entered the kitchen's doorway with a tired but happy face as she too was led to the table by a pushy Molly Weasley who insisted that the young auror ate something.

"Hi Tonks," responded Harry with a wide smile directed at the pretty pink haired auror, "I'm glad you're still getting the chance to eat a good breakfast, now that your personal chef is gone.

"Why do you think I'm here so early," she responded playfully. "You got me hooked on breakfast, and I'll need it if I am going to keep up with you all day."

"Oh, so you just used me for me cooking, huh?" asked Harry cheekily, while enjoying the banter between them as long as they kept it to a minimum and not arouse other's suspicions.

"Well, you were a pretty good cook," she responded flatly, while her eyes lit up with mirth and the corners of her lips barely turned upwards.

"Just 'pretty good'?" asked Harry feigning indignation and staring wide eyed and incredulously at Tonks, "I'll have you know that I have been a premier chef since I was four and could reach the stove top."

"And you probable still make the same amount of mess," retorted Tonks straight faced for all of two seconds until bursting out into uncontrollable laughter at the continued look of indignation on Harry's face.

"I don't make a mess," pouted Harry seemingly dejected, but loud enough for everyone to hear, which set off Tonks for another round of giggles that a few others joined in on including a fake grumbling Harry who tried to act offended but failed miserably because of his proximity to his girlfriend.

"Are you ready to start training now?" she asked him after he was done throwing the fake temper tantrum and laughing along with the others, and she had finished her own light breakfast and stood deliberately from the wooden kitchen table.

"Sure, let's go out back," Harry continued as he too rose from his chair and thanked Molly for a great meal before following Tonks out into the back garden where yesterday's duel with Bill took place.

"Harry, do you mind if we watch for a little bit?" asked Hermione, following the pair out the back door with her parents behind her as they settled into some chairs on the back patio with their reading materials, intent on seeing what type of training the pair was talking about.

"Sure Hermione," responded Harry, "just stay on the patio so you don't get hit by any stray spells."

"Why don't you put up the temporary wards, Harry?" instructed Tonks as the two made their way out to the clearing past the back garden

before she added on with a whisper and poke of his ribs, “and no special glasses either mister.”

“You got it Dora,” whispered back Harry meaningfully and glad to be close enough to do so, sending a wave of pleasure through the witch’s body that she only associated with Harry.

The pair spent the next three hours dueling and practicing spells back and forth as the spectator crowd grew slowly as lunchtime approached. Ginny and Molly were the first to join the watching Grangers, and were later joined by Ron, since everyone else in the house was already at work. They all watched in continued awe as Harry defeated the auror in three consecutive duels to end their tiring and grueling practice session.

“Bloody Hell Harry,” exclaimed Ron in exasperation as the two duelists approached the small crowd of spectators on the back patio.

“Language Ronald,” scolded both Hermione and Molly simultaneously, earning a shared glance of appreciation between the two women and a few sniggers from Harry, Tonks, and Ginny at Ron’s rapidly reddening face.

“Do you practice like this every day?” asked a curious Ginny who was eagerly staring at the sweat soaked shirt of the boy she had crushed on forever, making Harry feel the slightest bit uncomfortable in front of Tonks because there was nothing he could really do.

“Um ...yeah ...pretty much,” he responded dryly as the many eyes of everyone present looked at him with a mixture of awe and disbelief.

“Why?” blurted Ron stupidly?

“Take a guess,” snipped back Harry rather caustically, as he was too tired answer questions again.

“Oh ...” Ron breathed out sheepishly, not needing another reminder of the previous night’s dinner conversation about You-Know-Who.

"Well, lunch is almost ready," started Mrs. Weasley dotingly, breaking any tension that had arisen before glancing at Harry and Tonks, "you two better go wash up first."

"Thanks Mrs. Weasley," smiled Harry as he turned to Tonks with a large growing smile. "I call first dibs," he added as he took off at a run inside and up the stairs to his room to get a change of clothes, hearing Tonks yelling behind him as he left. It didn't matter however, as when Harry reached the second floor bathroom; he found it locked with a hysterically laughing Tonks who had just apparated there, on its other side.

"You're too slow Harry," she teased through her fit of laughter. "You better try harder next time."

"You think you've won?" asked Harry devilishly before quickly apparating onto the other side of the door, nose to nose with a startled but silenced Tonks as Harry captured her mouth in a passionate kiss.

"So ...can we share the shower?" he asked cheekily as he raised his eyebrows challengingly.

"Harry, you better get out of here this second," started a flustered Tonks, "what if someone sees you?"

"Oh fine Dora," pouted Harry with a sad puppy dog look followed by a wink. "You spoil all my fun," he continued before disappearing back to the outside of the bathroom door and yelled loud enough for the others who had now entered the house to hear, "you better be quick about it."

"Ha, you wish Potter," she laughed as she started running the water for her shower and thinking about the young wizard on the other side of the door.

"I wish for a lot of things," replied Harry softly through the door as he thought about his now naked girlfriend only a few feet away separated by a single door.

"It's all yours Harry," she purred sweetly as she winked at the waiting wizard when she appeared in the open doorway fully dressed and ready to head down to lunch.

"Does that include you Dora?" he leaned close and whispered in her ear causing her cheeks to flush slightly as he deeply inhaled her clean scent.

"You bet it does," she whispered back before forcing herself to step back and head for downstairs before they got caught doing something she was seconds away from trying.

Harry made it down for lunch just as everyone but Tonks and Ron had finished, and quickly dug into the delicious beef stew. The talk around the table was still mostly centered on Harry and Tonks' dueling and training, since the rest of the kids were eager to learn as well. Harry quickly deflated their delusions of grandeur when he said they would need to start running every morning if they were really serious about it. Then, if they showed initiative, then they could talk about joining the other training he was undertaking with Tonks.

"You want us to run with you? Hermione said you get up at five in the bloody morning to run," protested Ron grumpily, and then apologized to Hermione and his mother who both scolded him for language again.

"You don't have to run at five, that's just when I like to ...before it gets too hot. Plus it's a great way to wake up and build endurance, you should all consider it," spoke Harry wisely.

"Enough talking about boring stuff, does anybody want to play a game of quidditch?" asked Ron after finishing his stew and realizing that only Harry was still eating and everyone else seemed ready to do something.

"Sure," chorused Tonks, Ginny, and Harry simultaneously, before all looking to Hermione to get her answer, being the last of the young crowd to decide on playing.

Harry and the two willing females, Tonks and Ginny ended up flying for over an hour as chasers trying to score on Ron. Harry and Ron

were both pleasantly surprised by not only Ginny's skill in the position, but also Tonks' as well. The trio made quite a formidable group, and was really able to put Ron through the paces for most of the time giving him quite the practice he needed. They stopped when Harry had to get ready for his jujitsu class, and he and Tonks had to move quickly to get there on time.

Harry was exhausted as class was finishing, having been put through a seriously difficult last class before the small weekend break for the Tournament. With everything he had been doing today, he was more tired than usual, but not ready to go back to the Burrow just yet. He and Tonks decided to spend a wonderful forty minutes alone together on a bus stop bench, snogging and enjoying the little time they had together. All too soon however, they needed to return to the Burrow for dinner, and after a final kiss in their alleyway, they disappeared only to reappear just outside the Burrow's front door.

AN: It's been over a year since I started posting this story, and even longer since I began writing it. Happy to say that at least that part is finished, only typing left, and then on to my other stories which have been patiently waiting for my return.

Thanks to all those who review, although the numbers are too great for me to include all of your names. I appreciate all your words and advice, but felt the need to especially thank: FluffyNevyn, msgupy, dragoon0726, and Madfoot Moony. Also, special thanks go to PhilipL for providing insight and help for me to make this story better and more enjoyable for you all.

## Chapter 13

Harry was awake just before dawn on Saturday morning and stretching in the back garden of the Burrow before his run, when he was joined by two very sleepy females. Hermione and Ginny had both decided to take him up on the offer to train, and after he greeted them both warmly he showed them some basic and essential stretches before they began. He told them to take it at a comfortable pace for themselves, it was not a race nor were they being graded. After reminding the two of the properties' ward boundaries and reminding them both to stay within them at all times, they began.

The two girls understood quickly why he showed them the ward boundaries and told them it wasn't a race. Harry was out of their sight and well up ahead of them only moments after starting, and they both knew they would be in for a long day. The two girls only completed two circles around the property line, and both dropped to the ground overly exhausted as Harry passed them up yet again, running at a pace that didn't seem possible to them. Harry finished his last lap in the time it took Hermione and Ginny to catch their breath and even get a drink of some water from the jug Harry brought out.

"You two did really well ...how are you feeling?" he asked cheerfully and relatively out of breath?

"I feel like I was hit with a permanent jelly-legs jinx," responded Ginny tiredly from her original collapsed spot after finishing, but looking decidedly better than his bushy haired best friend.

"Me ...too," grunted Hermione whose breath still seemed incredibly labored and whose hair was sweaty and falling out of its ponytail in a wild windblown sort of way that Harry found fascinating.

"Then I'll let you skip the weights and Tai Chi today, but you both better do some serious stretching and then go soak in a hot shower or tub," he finished as he left the two stunned, and one heavily blushing girls to head to his own room to finish his workout while they contemplated his madness at working out even more, or at least wondering if they would get to watch at some point.

Harry returned to his room, locked the door and then descended down into his trunk's tent compartment where he was able to finish his Tai Chi and weight training exercises quickly and in peace. He returned to his bedroom afterwards, and was able to get a hot shower thanks to magic since he seemed the last to get his turn in the upstairs bath. He dressed in some comfortable blue jeans and one of his favorite new t-shirts before coming down for breakfast. He was slightly surprised upon entering the kitchen, finding Arthur and the twins present since he hadn't seen much of them in the mornings, but then it was Saturday.

"What are you doing up," started George inquisitively?

"This early in the morning," finished Fred?

"Oh, I've been running in the mornings," Harry answered casually.

"Yeah ...I think you broke the two girls," laughed Arthur warmly as he remembered seeing them upon coming inside, and shook his head in amusement as Dan and Emma Granger joined in laughing.

"You should have seen their faces when I told them I was giving them a break today," laughed Harry, "they're not going to like me much if they keep up with it."

"Keep up with what?" asked Fred and George equally confused and in synch.

"Running, Tai Chi, some weight lifting and kick boxing ...it's all part of the training package," he finished with a mischievous gleam in his beautiful eyes that did not get missed by the occupants of the kitchen as Mrs. Weasley loaded him up with a large plate of her wonderful breakfast. "You two are welcome to join us."

"No thanks Harry," responded Fred instantly.

"You know ...work," added George equally afraid as his twin.

"Oh yeah," started Harry dramatically, "we wouldn't want to upset that private investor in your shop ...would you?"



Harry had to use every Occlumency ability he possessed to avoid laughing at the looks of fear that came over the twins' faces. Nor did he miss the very interested looks sent his way from the adults in the kitchen, who seemed very eager to catch the twins and figure out where they got their joke shop start up money. Harry just ducked his head to avoid the looks passing around the room, and was thankfully spared by the sound of someone apparating at the front door, knocking, and entering in one swift and timely manner until she tripped in the living room and they all heard her cursing.

"Hi Tonks," called out Harry quickly and with a genuine smile on his face, all previous discussions seemingly dropping from his mind and he awaited Tonks arrival eagerly.

"Wotcher Harry ...everyone," she responded to the table as she walked in the kitchen to be greeted by everyone and led to the table by a fussing Molly who quickly gathered her some breakfast.

"Hello Tonks dear, eat up," ushered Molly as per usual.

"Are Ron and the girls ready?" she asked after taking a few bites of eggs and catching Harry's eyes, wondering when they would get the chance to be alone again.

"I'm sure Ron is still sleeping, it is before noon," answered Arthur happily, drawing chuckles from his wife and twin boys who knew Ron too well.

"And the girls are no doubt trying to recover from running with Harry this morning," added Emma Granger with a slight upturn of her lips as she remembered their expressions when she talked to them after their baths.

"You didn't Harry?" asked a wide eyed and then glaring Tonks, quickly causing Harry to lose his smile and gulp nervously at the look he was getting from his girlfriend. "Now they are going to be sore all day ...you prat."

"Sorry Tonks ...I wasn't thinking," replied Harry sheepishly.

“Or maybe just not thinking with your brain,” retorted Tonks scathingly, and with a hint of sadness and anger slowly under her cool surface as the others in the kitchen laughed innocently at Harry, or in Molly and Emma’s cases with a little bit of hope in their eyes. “I’ll be waiting out in the garden,” she added and quickly got up and left the kitchen while everyone was sharing hopeful looks at Harry, except the one person he wanted to.

Harry knew that Tonks was pissed, but he was only just now starting to figure out why. The extra hopeful looks of the two mother’s especially, made Harry instantly aware of the awkward position he was in. Did they both think he was interested in their daughters? Sure Hermione was pretty and all, but she was like his best friend, maybe even a sister of sorts, and if Ron didn’t kill him Hermione’s constant nagging would. And Ginny has always been Ron’s protected and sheltered little sister, she had fantasized and crushed on him before he even knew about magic. Maybe most girls did, but Ginny was the only one he knew to be so open about her feelings of hero worship. Harry had enough problems without worrying about little girls worshipping the image of him. He needed somebody that could take care of themselves, a woman ...Tonks.

“I’ll be right back,” spoke Harry as soon as the eyes seemed to stop waiting for his response, and he quickly followed Tonks out to the back corner of the garden a good ways from the house hoping to go undetected.

“We’ll go get Ron up,” spoke George immediately after seeing Harry go out the door, sharing a knowing look with his twin.

“And tell the girls to get ready,” added Fred expertly as the two raced out the kitchen leaving several confused adults in their wake.

“Dora ...I’m sorry,” pleaded Harry once he was close enough to not have to shout, as her back was still towards him so she couldn’t see his approach.

“Don’t Dora me, Harry,” she snapped as she spun around on the spot angrily and advanced on him quickly with a finger poking in his chest.

"I should have known you'd want to dump me now that we've slept together ...did you get what you wanted from the metamorph?"

"Tonks, that's not true and you know it," hissed back Harry trying to keep his voice down as he pleaded with his eyes for her to believe him, "I have no interest in other girls Dora ...I love you."

"Oh ..." she squealed excitedly before launching herself into Harry chest and sending him toppling backwards and using him as a cushion for herself before she planted him with a passionate kiss. "I love you too."

"Careful Dora, everyone's just inside," replied Harry after the initial tackle and kiss, although his smile and eyes spoke an entirely different story.

"I love you so much Harry," whispered Tonks meaningfully into his ear before trailing a light kiss behind it causing his body to tingle warmly.

"I love you too Dora," he answered with his own gentle kisses to her exposed neck, knowing he never meant anything more.

"These new sleeping arrangements just bite," she whined several moments later, as neither had made any attempt to move off the ground.

He had never felt anything close to this before, and knew it was a feeling he had never experienced until recently. He had cared for others, but never had he opened up his life and his heart and placed it into the protection of another. To share and connect on a level he never even knew existed until the lovable woman in his arms came into his miserable life and completely took it by storm. Having now said the words out loud, he knew without any doubt that his words were the absolute truth; he did in fact love Nymphadora Tonks with all of his being. She knew more about the real Harry than any other living soul, and even the deceased ones who never had the opportunity to know their son and godson before they were taken from his life by Voldemort.

He was also now worried that since declaring and accepting that love, that he had put Tonks in a much more dangerous situation. She would now be at the top of Voldemort's and every Death Eaters hit list, just because of her affiliation with the-Boy-Who-Lived. By telling her the truth, he had effectively put a much bigger target and price on her head and that she deserved the truth about everything. He had to come clean with her about the Prophecy soon, it was the one piece of information he had not shared, mainly because he just didn't want to think about it, or worry her further. She was already an auror and Order member, so thankfully she was used to being targeted by dark wizards, but it didn't ease Harry's worry any, since those same jobs usually also put her in the line of fire more often than not.

"Come on, we have to go get everyone together," started Harry after he had thought about everything enough and realized that everyone was still just inside and could have seen them if they had been looking.

Harry and Tonks quickly got up when they realized how exposed they were and began walking back to the Burrow's back door through the garden, and separated to dispel any suspicion. Unfortunately for them, two people were in a position to see the entire conversation, fall, and kiss. They were still now glued to their spots speechless for one of the few times ever. They slowly came around, and shared an evil knowing identical grin before skipping off to meet the others for their day at the muggle fighting tournament, courtesy of the two people previously snogging in their back garden.

"Are you all ready?" asked Harry to the group of eager looking witches and wizards, all very excited to get out of the house and away from their parents to see what Harry's been up to this summer.

"You bet stud," replied the twins in unison with large smiles on their always mischievous looking faces that Harry found slightly disconcerting, but was too afraid to ask about it.

"Alright, then grab a hold of the portkey ...it's taking us to the alley we use to get to the dojo ...we can walk from there," spoke Tonks importantly as she held out the piece of rope for everyone to grab hold of.

As the familiar tug behind their navels indicated, the portkey took them almost instantly to the familiar side alley destination Harry had been using for almost two weeks now for class. They all landed successfully and surprisingly to the others, who were used to both Harry and Tonks both being relatively clumsy at transportation methods. Tonks stored the rope in her pocket for later, and the group of seven began the several block walk to the auditorium that the Tournament was being held in all weekend.

As the group approached the large auditorium, the crowds began to thicken slightly as apparently a great many people would be there to watch. Harry was still easily able to spot the very tall and muscular Malcolm with his shiny bald head standing with another shorter man near the auditorium's main entrance. Leading the group forward, Harry met his classmate's eyes and smiled as he approached the dark skinned man who looked remarkably like the auror Kingsley Shacklebolt.

"Hi Malcolm," he called in a friendly greeting as he finally reached his larger classmate.

"Hey Harry," Malcolm replied in his deep velvety voice, "this is Shawn," he continued, motioning to the shorter and even darker skinned man next to him. "Shawn ...this is Harry, the new kid in class."

"Hi Harry, it's nice to finally meet you," greeted Shawn with a handshake as his sharp dark brown eyes scanned the crowd of people behind him with an easy smile on his face.

"You too Shawn," responded Harry, "oh sorry ...this is Tonks, Hermione, Ginny, Ron, Fred, and George."

"I'm Fred, he's George."

"Knock it off George," replied Harry to the stunned and wide eyed twins who didn't really think anyone could tell them apart easily.

"How do you know he's George?"

“Well believe it or not Fred ...I am smarter than the both of you combined,” replied Harry sarcastically before laughing at their gob smacked faces.

“We need to talk later Potter,” spoke George lowly and much more seriously than anything Harry remembered, and promised to keep a closer eye on the twin troublemakers.

“It’s nice to meet you all, even if I can’t tell which of you is Fred or George,” laughed Malcolm as he shook everyone’s hands in turn. “Why don’t you go get your tickets, I’ll wait here ...we can chat more inside.”

Harry told everyone to stay put, and that tickets were on him ignoring Ron’s slight glare. He quickly got in line and in no time had everything, including two-day passes for him and Tonks who would be back tomorrow. The now larger group of nine made their way into the auditorium slowly, making sure they stuck together and didn’t get lost in the cyclone of activity going on around them. The main lobby had been converted into a small martial arts flea market, with vendors of every kind selling their wares to the hundreds of eager spectators and fans.

The four Weasley’s looked around at everything with a fascinated interest, having grown up hearing much about muggles, but never really having been among so many at once. Hermione too was fascinated with everything having never studied martial arts, but was at least prepared for what she was getting into. Tonks loved all the booths, as did Harry, and the group agreed to come back through here after they had found some seats among the general admission crowds.

They let Malcolm and Shawn lead the group to a great area of seats that overlooked several of the Tournaments mats at once. After procuring those seats, Tonks let the twins go off on their own as long as they didn’t misbehave and returned within an hour, making sure they knew where they were sitting. The rest of the group settled down in their seats to chat a little before an announcer came out to introduce the participants, explain the rules, and then begin the

Tournament. They were treated to several of the early round bouts, and even got to see Michael, the best student from their class win his first match against a very loose and free moving Brazilian fighter who almost appeared to be break dancing.

The group stayed at the Tournament until just past six o'clock that evening, having greatly enjoyed the day out in the muggle world and the Tournament itself. After saying their goodbyes to Malcolm and Shawn, the group returned to the Burrow with a little time to spare before dinner. They used the time to put away their purchases, since everyone bought something, and to bombard Harry with countless questions about the Tournament, fighting styles, and muggle things that they didn't want to ask in front of Malcolm and Shawn. Harry enjoyed telling them about the few forms he knew a little about, and others he himself had just seen for the first time at today's event. They also all thanked Tonks for taking them and giving them a little freedom they knew they would not have gotten otherwise.

Dinner that night was relatively noisy as the kids' related tales of the day's Tournament, but you could tell that exhaustion was slowly starting to settle in on many of them. Bill enjoyed the stories, but had to tell Harry that he was going to pass on going tomorrow in order to visit Fleur's parents who were in town this weekend. Harry was fine with it, and shared a knowing glance with Tonks who would probably be the only one with him tomorrow if they played their cards right, and told Bill to enjoy himself and to say hello to Fleur and Gabrielle for him.

After dinner, everyone retired to the Living Room to stay up and chat for a bit, or read in Hermione's case. Unfortunately for Harry, who was about to play a game of chess versus Ron, he was approached by the twins and asked to come with them to 'talk'. So Harry followed the two up the stairs and into their bedroom, someplace Harry had never in his time at the Burrow been in, and to tell the truth, was a little nervous about.

"Harry," spoke George once inside the room, as his brother immediately began putting up privacy spells, "we need to talk."

"You want to know how I can tell you apart?" asked Harry accusingly as he looked at them each for several long seconds, seemingly judging their responses and reactions, and knowing that he was at least somewhat right by Fred's flinch.

"There is that," answered George uncomfortably, but with a growing smirk that soon found its way onto his face. "But first ..."

"We wanted to talk about this morning," continued Fred.

"And what you and a certain auror were doing," added George.

"...rolling around snogging in the garden," they finished triumphantly in unison, knowing they had turned the tables on their young friend who cursed viciously.

"Fuck! ...Okay," continued Harry after he realized he was screwed, but hoped he could still get out of it relatively unscathed if he could convince the twins not to rat on him, or intimidate them into it. "...I'm only going to say this once. You will not tell anyone what you saw ...got it. We could both be in a lot of trouble if word got out too soon, and if you ruin this for me, it will be the last thing you do."

"You got it Harry," answered a nervous and nodding Fred.

"Our lips are sealed," added George, "we just wanted to tease you a bit ...sorry Harry."

"Its okay guys, I just don't want Tonks to get in trouble, and believe me, she would be in a world of trouble if this gets out," answered Harry, seemingly deflated of his earlier anger, and more just worried about what could happen to the woman he loved.

"We understand Harry," replied Fred.

"Yeah, you can count on us," added George.

"Good, thank guys," Harry responded gladly, and feeling a little bad about his earlier threats enough to give them an answer to their question. "Oh, and I can tell you apart by your aura, although I didn't



know that was what it was called until this summer. But I've always been able to feel a difference between you, I only couldn't really pin it down.

"What's the difference feel like?" asked George curiously as his twin nodded, also wanting to know that answer.

"Well, George ...you always feel a bit more dominant, and Fred has a greater desire to prove himself or catch up to you at some level, although I'm not sure how I feel that," answered Harry equally curious now that he thought more about it. "Plus George usually likes to stand on the left for some reason."

"That's because he thinks his right profile is more striking," laughed Fred happily, causing his twin to shoot him an accusing glare.

"At least I'm more dominant ...being the oldest an all," responded George haughtily.

"Yeah, by twenty seconds," huffed Fred mockingly.

"As interesting as this discussion is," started Harry, hoping to bring there little meeting to close, "I think I better head downstairs before you two come to blows."

"You got it stud," replied George cheekily, earning him a half hearted glare from Harry which he quickly appeased, "don't worry Harry; your secret is safe with us."

"You have our word," added Fred as he cancelled all the spells on the door so they could all leave the room.

Harry headed back to the Living Room, while the twins said their goodbye's to everyone, thanked Tonks again, and apparated back to their apartment above the shop on Diagon Alley. Ron was busy playing Bill in chess, so Harry grabbed his copy of NEWT Transfiguration, and settled on one of the comfy chairs to read. Hermione, Ginny, and Tonks were all huddled on the sofa whispering and giggling, so Harry didn't feel bad about doing his own thing, and quickly became immersed in this year's text.

He was easily making it through the first half of the thick tome, dealing almost exclusively with magical theory of Transfiguration. Reading all about will and intent, concentrated focus and detailed clarity, power and imagination, and the intricate forming of the magic to get it to cooperate. He greatly enjoyed the theories behind Transfiguration, having worked on a lot of it with Tonks this summer; he was starting to really understand the many vital steps involved. He couldn't wait until this year's lessons with his Head of House as he begun on the next large section dealing with human transfiguration, something that thanks to his metamorph abilities was going to come very easy for the young wizard.

"HARRY!" yelled Tonks, Ginny, and Hermione exasperatedly, trying to get his attention.

"Yeah," he mumbled without even looking up into their shocked faces at him engrossed in a textbook.

"Goodnight Harry, I'm leaving," started Tonks which did the trick and instantly got the young wizard's attention as he looked up to find an almost empty room. "Everyone else already went to bed, and Ginny and Hermione are going now ...you should too, we have another long day at the Tournament tomorrow."

"Oh yeah ...sorry Tonks," replied Harry with a small smile to the pretty auror but nothing that would seem unusual in front of the others. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"Yep ...bye," she finished with a returned slightly sad and knowing smile that they wouldn't get to say goodnight properly.

Harry went upstairs to his room, but ended up staying in bed late into the night finishing his reading on human transfiguration before he organized and cleared his mind as he prepared for bed. He still couldn't believe the ease with which his Occlumency exercises had progressed to, and how much it helped him absorb information and more importantly, sleep nightmare free. His scar had been so quiet since he had finished purging Voldemort's magic and setting up a

magical block against it to prevent the dark magic from returning, and keeping the Dark Lord from his mind.

He woke up at his usual early hour on Sunday morning, and was out in the back garden already stretching when he was again joined by Ginny and Hermione for the morning run. After a quick greeting, and the girls taking extra time to stretch the super soreness they were experiencing, they all began at their own paces. Upon finishing this time, he found the girls already doing extra stretching, having finished themselves with the lighter day, and joined them on the lawn to see how they were feeling after day two.

They both admitted to being really sore when they began despite the nutrients potion they both took yesterday to help their bodies recover, but also spoke of how much better prepared they were today, with stretching and warming up. They asked Harry what type of exercises he usually did afterward, and after a brief explanation agreed to show them a few Tai Chi forms they could practice. He was more than happy to demonstrate and teach the basics that he had started with, and mentioned that he had a good book on the subject which unsurprisingly excited Hermione.

After leaving the girls, he returned to his tent to finish his weight lifting and heavy bag exercises before grabbing a quick shower. He dressed in a tight silver t-shirt and black jeans and boots, and made his way downstairs for breakfast before he had to go to the final day of the Martial Arts Tournament. He was greeted in the Burrow's kitchen by Molly and Arthur, Bill and Fleur, David and Emma, Hermione, and Ginny.

"Morning Harry," greeted Bill happily, the first to see him enter the quickly crowding kitchen.

"Hi Bill ...Fleur," he replied kindly, flashing them both a happy smile, "it's good to see you again."

"Hi 'arry," responded Fleur, "...you too."

"How's working at Gringotts?" he asked as he found a seat after greeting everyone else and getting a large plate of eggs and kippers from Mrs. Weasley.

"It iz wonderful," she replied excitedly as she spared a glance to Bill and gave his unsuspecting cheek a quick kiss, "thanks to Bill."

"That's great ...I'm real happy for you both," responded Harry sincerely as he watched the two who obviously cared a great deal about one another across from him.

"Thank you 'arry," returned Fleur with a now very pleased smile on her face at Harry's acceptance, knowing it would go a long way in helping her with the rest of the Weasley's.

"Hey Harry," piped up Ginny curiously, "How long are you planning on being at the Tournament today?"

"I should probably stay to the end," responded Harry thoughtfully, "it's been really educational ...and will probably really help with my classes."

"Do you think Michael has a chance to win?" asked Hermione from behind the open copy of Household Charms and Transfiguration, which she seemed to be progressing through quickly.

"NO WAY!" interrupted Tonks dramatically as she stepped into the kitchen wearing a short jean skirt and bubble gum pink tank top that matched her hair brilliantly. "That little Kim guy is going to win easily."

"Yeah, he was quite good," agreed Harry happily as he caught a good look at the sexy outfit Tonks was wearing and the bright smile on her heart shaped face, "but Michael does pack quite the punch."

"Yeah, I remember that day," replied Tonks with a slight wince at remembering the beating he took in that first class as she found a seat at the table and took a plate of food from Molly thankfully, and seemingly oblivious to the looks the older woman was giving her about her inappropriate attire.

“Oh Hermione,” started Harry after he finished his meal, and waited for Tonks to do the same, “I left two Tai Chi books on my bed if you or Ginny want to borrow them.”

“Thanks Harry,” the two girls responded in eerily reminiscent unison to the twins that it was momentarily frightening.

“Well, we better get moving so we’re not late,” started Harry once Tonks was ready, and the two stood and prepared to leave, “we’ll see you at dinner.”

“Be careful you two,” called Molly as they left the kitchen after a chorus of goodbyes from everyone present, and she proceeded to clean up after breakfast, knowing Ron wouldn’t be down for still another hour at least. “So what does everyone else have planned today?”

“Hermione and I are going to the pond to swim and read,” answered Ginny, knowing her mum was asking her since everyone else were adults and already had their own set things to do. “We’ll be back for lunch, come on Hermione ...let’s go get ready.”

Harry and Tonks left the Burrow, and quickly apparated to the customary alleyway, where Harry was immediately tackled to the ground by a very excited and passionate Tonks. She immediately started planting kisses on his face and neck, and for several minutes Harry ignored the uncomfortable ground and deepened the kisses, until they were both out of breath and panting heavily. They reluctantly pulled apart before they got too carried away in the dirty alley, and had to rush the several blocks to the auditorium in time to meet Malcolm and Shawn waiting out front for them in the same spot as yesterday.

“Just the two of you today?” asked Malcolm upon seeing them approach, and had to raise his eyebrows when he noticed their entwined hands.

“Yep ...we’re just a small crowd today,” laughed Harry as he gave Tonks’ hand a light squeeze.

“So ...are you two a couple?” asked Shawn finally noticing their hands and trying to remember if he missed this yesterday among all of their friends.

“Um ...yeah, but we haven’t told any of our friends yet,” responded Harry somewhat embarrassedly until he heard Malcolm let out a hearty laugh.

“Then yesterday’s performance was very impressive indeed. I would have never guessed,” he chuckled loudly at the younger couple’s looks of relief before sharing a knowing smile with Shawn and leading the group into the auditorium.

After getting to the same section of seats from yesterday, the group settled in to talk for a short bit, telling each other about themselves. As the announcer came out to begin the day, Harry and Tonks decided to go check out the vendors before the Tournament really got going. Harry ended up spending a good chunk of pounds at almost every table as he loaded up on books, videos, outfits, and weapons of virtually every kind, both for real and practice. After almost every other table, Harry would have to go someplace hidden, which was difficult in a muggle filled arena and shrink the packages until they were all small enough to fit in his pants pockets, not wanting to have to carry stuff around all day and risk people asking to see what was in his bags.

The pair returned to their seats relatively soon, and ended up spending the rest of the time watching the Tournament with Malcolm and Shawn, and chatted comfortably with their new friends until almost four in the afternoon. They then said their goodbyes and left the auditorium, heading in the direction of the side alley they originally appeared in. The couple took their time, walking hand in hand the several blocks back; enjoying the small amount of alone time they had together, knowing it would be few and far between while Harry was at the Burrow for the rest of the summer. They returned to the alleyway with plenty of time to make Harry’s planned side trip, and only stopped for a short minute to get in a few good snogs.

“Okay Harry ...here’s the coordinates for Neville’s, I had Moody get them for me,” started Tonks as she handed him a slip of paper, “it should be good practice for coordinate apparition ...come on.”

“I’ll see you there Dora,” he replied after glancing at the parchment containing what he assumed were muggle latitude and longitude numbers, and disappearing with an almost inaudible pop.

Harry arrived without a sound at the foot of a small hill that was surrounded by a high stone fence, and directly in front of a large brick and wrought iron gate with an intricate ‘L’ at it’s center. A second later, a small pop signaled the arrival of Tonks next to him, wearing a big smile and proud look on her pretty heart shaped face at Harry’s continued successes at anything he seemed to apply himself to. They took in the sight of the gate for several seconds, and then looking past it and up towards the hill they knew to contain Longbottom Manor before Harry approached the gate with his wand in front of him.

“I’ll just knock, and let them know we’re here,” replied Harry over his shoulder as his wand tip came in contact with the gate and the wards exterior border glowed blue before he spoke, “Hey Neville, Happy Birthday! It’s Harry, come let me in.”

“Harry?” called Neville’s shocked voice as he came running down the hill towards the gate, “what are you doing here?”

“I was planning to wish you a happy birthday ...but if you’d rather I gave your present to someone else ...” started Harry sarcastically and drawn out.

“Oh ...can you prove you’re Harry,” asked Neville now that he was close enough to see his dorm mate, but still being cautious none the less.

“Sure Nev ...expecto patronum,” he answered easily, shooting his trademark unduplicatable stag patronus through the gate and directly towards a now wide eyed birthday boy who had no doubts in his mind any more.

“Who’s your friend?” he added after the silver patronus disappeared and he realized Harry wasn’t alone, but opened the gate anyway to let them in.

“Oh sorry ...Neville, this is Tonks; Tonks, Neville,” introduced Harry simply.

“Wotcher Neville, it’s nice to finally meet you,” spoke Tonks happily as she reached out her hand to shake the taller and much more fit looking classmate than Harry had described.

“Oh ...um ...hi,” stuttered Neville shyly towards the attractive older witch that accompanied Harry, who smiled sweetly at the attention as she stole a quick glance towards a smirking green eyed wizard. “Do you want to come in?”

“Sure Nev, thanks,” responded Harry gladly as they followed his fellow Gryffindor up the pathway leading to a now visible large and spacious looking Manor.

After another round of introductions to Augusta Longbottom, Neville’s paternal grandmother, the group of four was comfortably seated around the Longbottom’s splendid Tea Room enjoying the several beverages and biscuits provided by a happy and well dressed House Elf named Winnie. Harry wasted little time wishing Neville a happy birthday, and happily handing over the two gifts he had found for his green thumb friend. Opening the smaller of the two wrapped packages, Neville received a large muggle book entitled An Encyclopedia of Botany, which confused him greatly until he opened it and got a look at its contents. An excited Neville thanked Harry considerably for the thoughtful and very interesting looking book before turning to the second bigger box that Harry had to enlarge, and said was from Hermione and Ron too who had given him the idea.

Neville was amazed at the small potted plant Harry called an Aloe Plant, and after describing its healing properties for minor burns, Neville was very excited to learn everything he could about the muggle form of Herbology. He never even knew that muggles had an entire field of study devoted just to plants, and that their plants had



their own uses and properties similar to their magical counterparts. Harry also returned Neville's Herbology books he had borrowed at the summer beginning, and was returned his three volume Defensive Magic set that Neville thanked him for repeatedly.

They stayed and chatted for a short while, finding out that Dean Thomas and Seamus Finnegan were due over shortly for dinner and to spend the next few days at Longbottom Manor. At one point, Harry asked to use the loo, and Tonks took that opportunity to invite Neville, his friends and Grandmother to a surprise birthday party for Harry tomorrow at the Burrow. She told them to come any time after four and before six, and provided them with a portkey Bill slipped her this morning that was keyed into their wards and would bring them straight into the Living Room at their convenience. They accepted instantly, excited at the prospect, and had resolved any questions by the time Harry returned from the loo looking suspicious at all their quiet and guilty faces.

They soon said their goodbye's, and the pair returned to their alleyway to share a few kisses before returning to the Burrow just in time to sit down for Sunday night dinner, which was short Percy, Charlie, and Bill tonight who was still out with Fleur and her family. Hermione and her parents filled the other seats, and everyone enjoyed a fun filled and entertaining dinner. Harry told the others how the second day of the Tournament went, the quick visit with Neville, and talked to both Hermione and Ginny about the Tai Chi books which they had taken turns with and already read them, having little to do all day.

When dinner ended, everyone retired to the Living Room to continue chatting, reading, or playing games. Harry, who had so far had a very restful weekend, was beginning to grow rather restless as he played Ron several time in chess. He was silently counting down the hours until his sixteenth birthday in his head, and with about a half an hour to go, the adults turned in, no longer capable of waiting up for Bill's return. Which they only missed by twenty minutes, as he arrived at ten to midnight alone and in good spirits after a wonderful day with Fleur's parents. After the usual sibling grilling, Bill was just wishing Harry a happy birthday as the clock in the kitchen sounded

simultaneously as midnight occurred and the entire house and its foundation shook with an unholy explosion of sound....

--Break--

"Ah ...my loyal Death Eaterssss," hissed Lord Voldemort menacingly as he looked around him at his heavily reduced Inner Circle members, causing a slight shudder to run through most of them. "Tonight ...we strike back against Potter's Mudblood and Blood Traitor friends."

"And Potter himself, my Lord?" asked the oldest of the Death Eaters, Xavier Yaxley, as he bowed fearfully in front of his Lord cursing his own tongue for it's foolishness.

"I want Potter to suffer; killing his godfather was only the beginning. Now we will exploit his greatest weakness ...kill hisss friendsss."

"Yes, my Lord," answered a still prostrated Yaxley quickly.

"Gibbonsss, take your team to the Lovegood House in Ottery St. Catchpole, and when done head to the Burrow, where I expect the greatest resistance to be. Yaxley and Traverssss, your teamsss have the Quibbler officesss in Diagon Alley. Bellatrix, take your team and finish off the two remaining Longbottomsss at their Kent Manor. Severussss, you will lead the strike on the Mudblood'sss house in Derbyshire. Alecto and Amycus will lead their teamsss to the Burrow and once and for all rid the world of those blood traitor Weasleysss."

"Of course, my Lord," chorused several Death Eaters after Voldemort finished his orders, before all bowing low as a show of support and submission to their leader.

"Here are your teamsss' portkeysss," he hissed as he watched Wormtail pass a piece of black rope to each of the seven team leaders before scurrying quickly back to his Master's side. "Go prepare your teamsss, your portkeysss will activate just before midnight."

"Yes" "Thank you Lord," was just some of the cheers that erupted from the Inner Circle at their orders. They had been itching to get

back out on their terror induced killing of those they felt were inferior to them.

“You all now have twenty minutesss to prepare your strike teamsss, DO NOT FAIL ME,” Voldemort hissed angrily as his red eyes flashed dangerously at those few remaining of his once great Inner Circle. “Wormtail, you will follow Alecto and Amycus to the Burrow and then report back to me on who is there once the wards are taken down.”

“Yes Master,” groveled the rat-like man as he quickly scurried out of the dark chamber to get ready to leave.

The activity level was very high in the dusty old Riddle Manor of Little Hangleton as the senior most Death Eaters gathered their teams to prepare for a night of real fun and debauchery. Peter watched as the newer recruits gathered in their teams around their senior leaders eager for some real action as they got last minute instructions on the upcoming raids. They were all there except Bellatrix and Snape who were supposedly preparing their weapons or potions to experiment with and have some fun.

“Do not worry Severus,” came the unmistakably calm voice of Albus Dumbledore through the two way enchanted mirrors he shared with his spy for just such occasions. “The Grangers and Lovegoods are not home at this time. I will send Alastor to the Longbottoms, and I’ll go to the Burrow. Thank you for the warning my boy, now get back to your team before someone suspects something.”

“Yes Albus ...thank you,” replied Severus Snape, Potions Master and Death Eater Spy as he closed the mirror connection and returned to the preparation room where his team was in the final stages of preparation, along with the others giving them seventy plus Death Eaters preparing to strike simultaneously.

--Break--

Patrick Gibbons, a forty seven year old Senior Death Eater and his team consisting of four mid-level and six newer recruits, arrived by their portkey on the outskirts of Ottery St. Catchpole just minutes to midnight, and only kilometers away from the two teams arriving at the

Weasley property on the other side of the small village. The slightly hidden and awkward looking house in front of them belonged to Xenophilius Lovegood and his unusual daughter Luna, and had only the most basic of wards that they immediately started firing spells upon to overwhelm and collapse it. It only took the group a full ten minutes to destroy the wards, seal the house, set it on fire, and cast the Dark Mark into the night sky before the group took their second portkey to the other side of the village where a very loud and large commotion was already ringing through the otherwise quiet night.

--Break--

Xavier Yaxley and Martin Travers, two of Voldemort's oldest and most senior Death Eaters, each arrived with their ten man teams in a deserted alleyway just a few buildings down from the Quibbler offices located in the most deserted part of Diagon Alley. Slowly making their way towards the three story building under the concealment of darkness, they instantly encountered a rather normal and basic protection ward that many of the shops on the alley used at night. Travers, and his second in command and owner of one of those stores, Jeremiah Williams were able to take down the defensive wards in no time at all.

As soon as the wards collapsed, all twenty Death Eaters and their commanders rushed forward and spread out around the building. They immediately started sealing up every door and window except the main entrance, and within five minutes, had the entire building sealed. Yaxley cast the destructive fire explosion curse into the building's lobby just before Travers sealed the main doors permanently and then aimed his wand into the air.

"Mors Mord-,"

Pop Pop Pop Pop Pop

"Stupefy," shouted the first arriving of several men in the blue Auror's Cloaks.

“Aurors!” shouted one of the newer recruits nervously and stupidly just before the stunner hit his chest knocking him out cold, but also bringing everyone’s focus to the imminent showdown.

“Retreat!” shouted Xavier Yaxley’s rough voice in the no longer quiet night. “Avada Kedavra,” he added dropping an unlucky young auror to his death as he was arriving near his location before he touched his personal portkey returning him and two others closest to him back to his Master’s Headquarters.

At his call to retreat, every Death Eater threw a random spell of destruction or death at the arriving aurors before they too either triggered personal portkeys or apparated away. One of the last to leave, Jeremiah Williams succeeded in casting the Dark Mark before he too returned to Headquarters. He found most of his team celebrating their successful mission, without a single care for their stunned companion who was left to the mercy of the aurors. Poor Daniels hadn’t even been marked for three weeks, oh well ...you win some, you lose some.

--Break--

Severus Snape and his team of ten Death Eaters arrived in the wealthy muggle suburb outside of Derbyshire, and in front of a very plain but expensive looking house at Number 182 Delvin Circle. It took the group only ten minutes to dismantle the almost non-existent wards that all muggleborn students are given during their initial Hogwarts visit. They then locked and sealed the house, set it on fire, cast the infamous Dark Mark, and returned to Riddle Manor to await further news of the raids.

--Break--

Bellatrix Lestrange and her team comprised of the more sick individuals arrived in front of a familiar brick and wrought iron gate that she had visited fifteen years previously to torture the Longbottom Aurors. With an intense skill that always won her favor of the Dark Lord during raids, she single handedly dismantled the very strong wards around the large Manor in only a few minutes, allowing her team to enter the property while she continued her casting. As she

was almost finished putting up her own wards to trap them, she felt the activation of a portkey from inside the Manor, and cursed viciously. In one rage filled moment at loosing her prey, she blasted a killing curse into the Manor's front door obliterating it to shreds, and allowing her team to enter the house to pillage only to find it relatively empty before they set it ablaze, cast their Dark Mark and returned to the Dark Lord's Headquarters, totally pissed that they missed their chance to get the last of the Longbottoms.

--Break--

Twins Alecko and Amicus Carrows arrived with their joined teams at the sight of the Blood Traitors house outside Ottery St. Catchpole. Alecko placed a small stone on the ground at the edge of the wards, and spoke a whispered incantation causing it to glow an eerie yellow color before stepping back with her brother to watch. The yellow glow outlined the wards causing the whole earth to shake momentarily before they became visible while the yellow glow seemed to erode through them like acid. Once the wards were visible, the twins and their team started sending curses at the wards to hasten the dismantling process.

Peter Pettigrew who arrived with the twins and their teams, used the time they played with the wards, to quickly scout the area and then change into his rat animagus form, and separate himself from the Death Eaters to get a better look at the defenders once the wards fell. Patrick Gibbons and his team arrived from the other side of town just before the wards around the Burrow fell. Thirty Three Death Eaters and Wormtail from a different part of the yard watched with fascination as a dozen defenders stood already out in the yard waiting on the attacking Death Eaters, with wands drawn and ready. Peter only stayed long enough to notice many Weasleys, two Longbottoms, the Mudblood, the Metamorph, and ...Harry Potter, before activating his portkey the second he returned to his human form.

He returned to Voldemort's throne room, to find his master already questioning Yaxley, Travers, Severus and Bellatrix on their teams' successes. It appeared that Bellatrix was just getting off the floor, no doubt from exposure to the cruciatus curse the Dark Lord was so

fond of, and knew he shouldn't delay. He rushed forward throwing himself at his Master's feet and fighting back his usual fear, he quickly opened his mouth.

"Master," he began breathily as if he ran there, "the Potter boy is at the Burrow."

"What!" yelled the Dark Lord maniacally, "Severussss, Bellatrix ...take your teamsss to the Burrow immediately. Capture Potter ...kill everyone elssse."

"Yes Master," they both replied before turning to the still prostrated and cowering Pettigrew, "who else is there ...rat?" asked Bellatrix threateningly.

"Most of the Weasleys, the Mudblood, the Longbottoms, the Metamorph, two school kids, and probably an Order member or two, though I didn't see any," he replied shakily, knowing if he left something out he would be severely punished for it later.

"Gibbons' team arrived just before I left as the wards came down and I saw Potter."

"Ah ...very good indeed ...Wormtail, you will join them," added Voldemort coldly and without feeling as his mind already started thinking up ways to really celebrate that petulant Potter's birthday.

It was only a minute later when the two teams of Bellatrix and Severus, along with Wormtail, portkeyed to the spot outside the Burrow's property where the initial teams arrived. It also did not take them long to determine that this battle would not be won as easily by any means as they looked at the destruction and battles currently going strong. Severus' eyes filled with dread as he recognized many of the combatants, while Bellatrix's glowed with an eerie sense of destructive anticipation.

--Break--

The explosion that rocked the very foundation of the Burrow just as midnight struck on Harry's sixteenth birthday brought immediate

action by some and confusion from others. Bill, Fred, George, Tonks, and Harry all felt the assault begin on the houses wards because of the alerts they had tied to them, and knew instantly that the Burrow was under serious assault. They each made sure they had everything they would need on them before looking outside in the distance to see what caused the disturbance. Ron, Ginny, and Hermione each had to quickly run to their bedrooms to fetch their wands ...regardless of the Underage Law, they wanted to fight by their friends' and families' side. By the time they returned, they were joined by a frantic Molly and Arthur, a confused Emma and David, and in another flash the newly arrived group consisting of the occupants of Longbottom Manor.

Neville and his Grandmother, Dean and Seamus were deposited by Tonks' portkey right into the middle of the chaotic Living Room with several wands pointing in their direction. After a rushed explanation of what brought them here, they joined the group of defenders that were making their way outside and towards the properties' wards. Mrs. Weasley stayed behind to call and organize the Order and also protect Hermione's muggle parents, David and Emma.

Bill led everyone out onto the grounds as the wards wavered under the external onslaught, and explained what everyone should do when the wards came down. He tried to make sure everyone was as best prepared as they could be, and gave his sister an extra long glare trying to convince her that she wasn't ready for this fight which she defiantly returned. Most of them seemed really scared, and Bill wondered if maybe trying to stay and protect the Burrow was worth it. Then he met Harry's eyes, and knew that he would never have been able to convince the younger wizard to run from this fight, and his own resolve was somehow strengthened as well.

Harry and Tonks had quietly moved to the opposite end of the row of defenders from Bill, trying to spread out their strength for the impending battle. They shared comforting looks with one another before Harry got a determined look on his face and met Bill's eyes prepared for what was to come. With a quick look at his friends and family down the line from him, he whispered a silent prayer hoping they all survived before a final echoing BOOM shook the very earth



they stood on as the wards fell to reveal the thirty plus Death Eaters that stood against them.

“Reducto ...bombardo ...reducto,” shouted Harry in the split second of silence in the wake of the wards’ collapse not wanting to waste time. Stringing his curses together in one repetitive fluid motion of his wand that caused a series of explosions to occur at the ground in front of the Death Eaters, starting the battle with a bang, and not waiting for them to strike or get too comfortable.

Ten minutes into the fight however, things started to look bleak as by now both Seamus and Dean had fallen, one to a shattered shoulder and arm, the other to a skin boiling curse. Luckily, they were both still alive, and Harry managed to banish them to the front door of the Burrow where they could hopefully be out of the fight and possibly get medical treatment if help ever arrived. The problem was that Harry was now in a fight for his life, as the attacker of both boys turned on him. He had been doing well for those first ten minutes, having taken down at least a half-dozen Death Eaters himself, but he recognized his current opponent as none other than the male half of the Carrows twins, and knew he would struggle fighting the experienced Unspeakable and Inner Circle Death Eater.

As the duel began, Harry felt he was overmatched, but swore to not give in and the two began trading shots. The arrival of twenty plus more Death Eaters reinforced those who had fallen on their side and the Death Eaters could start to feel and press their advantage. It didn’t last long however, as shortly after Snape and Bellatrix’s teams arrived, so did Albus Dumbledore and six other members of the Order of Phoenix. Minerva McGonagall, Mad Eye Moody, Kingsley Shacklebolt, Remus Lupin, Dedalus Diggle, and Hestia Jones gave the tired defenders a little hope upon their arrival.

Also several Death Eaters targeted the old Headmaster upon his arrival, hoping to overwhelm him and earn favor from their Lord, but did so as a detriment to themselves when their original opponents used their lack of concentration to stun, bind, or curse them. Bill was able to take down Patrick Gibbons this way after the two had been battling much like Harry and Amycus, or Tonks and Alecia. Hermione and Neville were also able to use the diversion to their advantage,

only to be reengaged by the Death Eaters who had finally brought down Ginny and Augusta Longbottom. The twins also fell a few minutes later, having been overwhelmed by the greater numbers for too long and were dropped by a pair of bone breaker curses they were too tired to avoid. Luckily, all four of the fallen were not harmed further, and Arthur skillfully managed to collect all four of them and send them towards the Burrow's front door.

The six Order members who arrived with Dumbledore were quickly engaged as well, as Bellatrix immediately eliminated Dedalus with a vicious cutting curse to his side, and was now putting Minerva through the ringer. The skilled Transfiguration Professor was still suffering from her attack at the school year's end, and was no match for the insane younger witch, but was able to hold out defending herself with countless transfigured items to intercept the most lethal of Bellatrix's curses. Hestia and Kingsley took up the positions left by the twins and Ginny, while Remus and Moody took over for Dean, Seamus, Augusta, and Neville who fell to a bludgeoning hex to his left leg the moment they arrived to assist him.

McGonagall fell next, but before Bellatrix could take any advantage, she was engaged by both Ron and Hermione who were both unfortunately tiring quickly, and in no position to actually help, only stall the inevitable. Bellatrix made short work of them by hitting Ron with a cutting curse to his stomach, and dropping Hermione by banishing several small rocks from the ground at her knocking her unconscious. Meanwhile, Remus sought out a familiar smelling former friend, and the two quickly began a heated duel that would leave both Marauders bloody and broken, neither gaining the edge needed to defeat the other permanently.

Albus Dumbledore, in all his knowledge and grace quickly began dispatching the lesser experienced Death Eaters before encountering his Potions Master and spy. He made quick work of Severus who hadn't really been fighting anyone, and was sure to give some physical evidence so as not to alert Tom to Severus' loyalties. It was at this point however, that he witnessed his two Gryffindor Prefects go down under the spell fire of Bellatrix and quickly moved to action. He began transfiguring all the debris around her into birds and other small animals which then attacked her swiftly and constantly, forcing

her to go on the defensive. It didn't take long for her to realize that this battle was lost, and with one last flourish sent two consecutive killing curses towards the Headmaster before calling out for a full retreat and activating her emergency portkey.

Tonks had been in the fight of her life since the battle began. She had almost immediately been pounced upon by Alecka Carrows, the moment the attack began, and had been almost completely on the defensive the entire time. If it hadn't been for all the extra training she had been doing with Harry, she knew that she would have gone down in the first few minutes. As it was, she was still struggling to stay upright after now almost twenty constant minutes of dueling, or at least defending. She had already begun a new collection of cuts, burns, and broken bones in her ankle and wrist from a nasty fall avoiding a killing curse ...but better than being dead. She knew that she was fading, but was able to continue and hold her own long enough. She had hardly noticed when the tide of the battle shifted and Bellatrix ordered a retreat for the Death Eaters since she had been so focused on surviving her own duel with Alecka that it took her by total surprise, and froze her in her spot.

Within seconds of Bellatrix's call for retreat, all seven of the remaining Death Eaters sent off their final curses, and activated emergency portkeys. Most simply sent killing curses, as they were the most destructive and they lacked individual minds and followed the leader. The Carrows twins were two of those to send off final killing curses before activating their portkeys, but by the time of the retreat, the fraternal twins were so close to one another, that they both sent their curses at the same opponent, knowing their Lord would not be pleased if they killed the Potter brat. Tonks' eyes went wide as saucers the moment she spotted the identical green beams of light heading in her direction, and after the call for retreat, was unprepared to do anything about it, and seemed stuck in place.

Harry had been slowly starting to get the upper hand on Amicus by the time of Bellatrix's call to retreat, and was ready for anything the older wizard was going to throw at him as a final parting shot, glad to have seemingly survived another battle. When the green light of the killing curse erupted out of his opponents wand for the first time in their duel, he was slightly taken back to the many times in his life that

spell had ended the life of his loved ones and friends, but was ready to dodge all the same. He was not however prepared for the spell not to be directed at him at all, but towards a now wide eyed and frozen Tonks.

If Harry ever had doubts about his feelings for Tonks, they were laid to rest in that split second he saw the killing curses approach her as he wondered what he would do without her. Reacting on pure instinct and an overwhelming feeling of desperation, he acted in the only way a Gryffindor knows ...foolishly charge ahead. The sickening CRACK that split the air next startled everyone on the battlefield, causing them all to look up towards its source and gape.

Harry had done the only thing he could think of to save his girlfriend at that moment, and crashed through the anti-apparition wards in place with an earth shaking crack, and putting himself protectively in front of Tonks just as the green lights where upon them. Instinctively he threw up his hands, wand forgotten as his magic exploded forward just in time to meet the incoming unforgivable curses, causing yet another even larger explosion that seemingly shook all of England for several seconds. Everyone within viewing distance was blown backwards from the heavily palpable magical backlashes that exploded in front of Harry and fell onto their backs and were knocked out cold.

AN: Sorry for the cliff hanger and the long wait, but I was not very happy with this chapter and kept reworking it. I also had to rewrite the ending in chapter 20 since I didn't like that too much either, but now everything is finished and back on track. Enjoy, and thanks to all reviewers and readers.

## Chapter 14

Albus Dumbledore slowly felt himself stirring after the heavy magical explosion that had knocked him and everyone else at the Burrow out cold only moments before. He could vaguely hear the distant trill of his Phoenix, Fawkes as she circled off to his left singing a lamenting tune that must have brought him back to wakefulness. Blinking open his eyes, he encountered only the dark night sky above him, but could still feel and even smell the magical residue in the air both from the battle itself, but mostly from Harry's final actions.

"Harry!" he whispered hoarsely and with a desperation he rarely experienced before bolting upright and searching the field around him for some sign of his favorite student.

It did not take him long to discover his enquiry in a crumpled heap to his left with Fawkes sadly singing over him. He could not remember a time in the last twenty years he had moved that fast, as he was quickly at the young wizards' side casting a diagnostic spell over his crumpled form. He both rejoiced and cried with the results, finding Harry still barely alive, but seemingly with next to no magic in his body, and covered in burns. He needed to get Harry to Madam Pomfrey, and quickly, but couldn't leave the scene without someone's knowledge of what was happening. Frantically looking around where Harry had fallen, he spotted the nearest Order member only twenty meters away.

"Ennervate," spoke Albus Dumbledore worriedly as he revived the unconscious Nymphadora Tonks, waking her from the magical blast that knocked out them all some minutes previously, and hoping that she was alright.

"Uggh ...w ...what happened?" groaned the real and unchanged metamorph, as her violet eyes fluttered open and she shook her natural black hair out her face slowly so as not to further disrupt the uncomfortable pounding in her head.

"I'll explain that later Nymphadora," spoke Dumbledore quickly and concernedly, as he helped the young auror into a sitting position to make sure she was stable and awake. "But first, I need you to start

waking the others and do clean up here, I have to take Harry to the hospital wing immediately.”

“HARRY?!” she shouted as her last memories of the incoming green lights and Harry’s arrival passed before her and she jumped to her feet frantically searching for him despite the growing headache and exhaustion she felt, “is he ...is he d ...dead?”

“He is alive, but only just ...I need to get him to Hogwarts now,” answered Albus in an urgent voice that brought no challenge, and too wrapped up in his own thoughts to notice the fear and pain in the young woman’s eyes as he spoke. “Use this portkey,” he continued handing her a long piece of rope, “to bring everyone back to Hogwarts once everything is settled here ...I’m taking Harry with me now.”

“Oh ...okay sir,” she stumbled, still worried about Harry as she looked around the Burrow’s grounds and saw it littered with the bodies of both Order members and Death Eaters, and wondered when and if she would finally get to see Harry.

Tonks watched as Dumbledore carefully kneeled next to Harry and pulled him into his arms as Fawkes landed on his shoulder and in a flash of fire the three were gone. Before she would let the tears come, she resolved to get to Harry as fast as she could, so set off with her task. She quickly made her way towards friendly faces, and after reviving Moody, Remus, Kingsley, Bill, and Arthur explained the situation and the group got to work. Kingsley and Moody started gathering and binding the fallen Death Eaters, all thirty seven of them including one Inner Circle member, Patrick Gibbons. They were soon joined by Hestia and Tonks and the four aurors began transporting the prisoners to Ministry holding cells, knowing they were going to have a lot of questions to answer to, and paperwork to fill out.

Arthur, Bill, and Remus had started with gathering all of their own family members and friends, and then heading towards the surprisingly still standing Burrow to check on the others. Tonks had given Arthur the portkey to bring everyone to Hogwarts, knowing her and her fellow aurors would have to deal with the Ministry for the time being, and wanting to get everyone to medical attention as soon as

possible. So finding the injured from the fight in front of the door, and reviving Molly, Emma, and David Granger who were all inside, they quickly explained what happened and took the portkey from Dumbledore.

The group of injured and exhausted Weasleys, Grangers, Longbottoms, DA and Order members arrived together in the entry of the Hogwarts Infirmary, and those that were well enough, instantly saw both a truly frightening and uplifting image. Madam Pomfrey, Albus Dumbledore, and Fawkes were all surrounding the bed of a pale yet burnt, bloody, and unconscious Harry Potter, casting spells or singing sadly in Fawkes' case over the slow rise and fall of the young wizard's chest.

"Albus?!" whimpered Molly Weasley quickly growing hysterical at the sight of Harry's pale, yet still burned body, "what happened?"

"He is alive ...beyond that, we are not sure," replied the tired old Headmaster sadly as he looked fondly upon the boy he loved like a son, unwilling to see him die.

"Get the injured into beds, which is the most urgent?" directed Madam Pomfrey quickly casting a few cleaning spells on Harry after spotting the unconscious and bleeding forms of several of her current and former students. She could only pray that somehow Mr. Potter would survive again, and not knowing what to do about him for the time being, she set to task

"Dedalus and Ron were both hit with cutting curses to their side and stomach, but I think Dedalus has already bled out ...Neville and Dean were hit with bludgeoning hexes to their leg and shoulder respectively, but their both stable for a few minutes ...Seamus was burned badly by some dark skin boiling curse ...the rest of us are exhausted and have some bumps and bruises, maybe a few minor broken bones, but those five got the worst of it," responded Remus who seemed the calmest on the outside, but was far from it after seeing his cub take those killing curses headed for Tonks. He knew however how important that information would be to the healer since these next few minutes would be crucial to all of their survivals.

“Molly, put this cream on Mr. Finnegan's burns, while I work on Dedalus and Ron,” ordered Poppy to a distraught Molly, hoping the task would take her mind off of her worrying, while she rushed between the two most serious cases to see what she could do, hoping beyond hope that her friend wouldn't be losing anyone today as she worked on her youngest son.

It only took one spell to determine that Remus was indeed correct, and Dedalus had bled out and died probably several minutes before, so she quickly got to work on the large gash that ran from Ron's left hip and across his lower stomach, and quickly repaired the tissue damage and closed the wound before pumping several vials of Blood Replenishing Potion down his throat, and hoping for the best. She then tackled Neville's leg which was also bleeding heavily just above the knee where his femur was sticking through the skin at an awkward angle. Luckily, he was still unconscious when she reset his leg, healed the tissue and skin and filled him with a little less Blood Replenishing Potion than Ron. Finally she got to Dean's arm and shoulder which was shattered severely in several places. She followed the same procedure, and within several difficult minutes had the three Gryffindors healed of their critical injuries and resting as comfortably as she could make them.

Madam Pomfrey, then went through the rest of the group, and fixed a variety of smaller and less life threatening injuries that everyone seemed to collect to some degree in the battle. She moved Dedalus' body into a private room, and had just about everyone in one of the hospital beds over the next hour or so. Dumbledore had left after the serious injuries were healed and a whispered conversation with Remus and Arthur, to help deal with the Ministry and Fudge. Dean, Neville, and Seamus eventually woke up just enough to receive another round of treatment before falling back asleep. Seamus had the salve re-applied while the others had to endure doses of Skele-Gro to strengthen their resetting and healing bones. Only Ron and Harry remained unconscious, although Ron's prognosis had been upgraded substantially after surviving the first hour, and looked to be getting his color back.

Remus and Molly seemed the most worried, Molly because of who she was, but Remus because he had witnessed the explosion of



magic powerful enough to stop twin killing curses and knock out everyone within a certain range, and couldn't for the life of him explain or understand any of it. He was so worried for his cub, but beyond worried he was also thoroughly confused by what he saw. Yes, Harry had survived a killing curse as a child, but that was due to Lily's sacrifice ...right? Now he had been hit by two simultaneously, and despite having little color in his face, and the burns on his skin and hands especially, he was breathing. He didn't understand it at all, but said a silent prayer to his never forgotten friends to protect and heal their son.

All of the younger students and DA members were confused and worried, but none of them had lasted long enough to witness the battle's conclusion, and nobody that did was here since Arthur confessed to missing it while dodging a parting curse himself. Most just expected to Harry to come around any moment because that was who he was, Bill on the other hand thought differently. He had not said a word about Harry or the blocked curses, still shocked and scared shitless for the young wizard he considered a brother and after talking to his parents, took the twins whose minor injuries had been healed easily back to the Burrow to check on the house and wards. He just couldn't think with that many people around, and needed some quiet to try and digest what he had seen Harry do. He defied the laws of magic again, by seemingly surviving twin killing curses, and did so to protect Tonks.

Bill thought a lot about that as he, Fred, and George silently walked out of the castle and towards Hogwarts gates, preparing to investigate the home they've lived their whole lives at. By the time they got outside the school's wards, they apparated home to see the damage. Luckily, the Ministry had seemed to have finished the clean up of the grounds, so he made his brothers go check on the house, while he started looking at the wards. His work was at least peaceful and quiet, and gave him the time he needed to better piece together the clues going in his mind, and he became determined to have a serious talk with Harry about relationships if he truly did survive. He had seen Harry do plenty of remarkable things just this summer in visiting with the younger wizard, and knew how much his emotions helped fuel his magic and couldn't help but wonder what was really going on between him and Tonks.

Harry's bed in the hospital wing had been curtained off after Dumbledore left but before Bill and the twins left, and only Madam Pomfrey and Minerva were allowed back there as they tried to figure out what was wrong. Poppy was nearing wits ends trying to help one of her fondest patients, and if it wasn't for Fawkes' continued soft singing over Harry, she probably would have given up by now. She had healed the burns everywhere except his hands which would need at least a few more treatments, but he seemed to be in an exhaustion induced coma, and his magic was almost non-existent to any of her scans. Over the two hours he had been here, it had been slowly improving with Fawkes' continued song, but still it was nowhere near his usual levels at the end of last school year, and certainly not as much as just a few weeks ago when she was called in to examine him. Minerva could do nothing but watch one of her oldest friends struggle to help one of her favorite students while she sat in the chair next to the bed hoping that Albus returned with some answers soon, and hopefully before the approaching morning. They were both interrupted from further thoughts and actions as they heard the hospital wing doors bang open and went to see who was here.

"Where is Harry?" shouted a frantic Tonks after throwing open the doors to the hospital wing and quickly scanning the beds for him.

"It's the middle of the night and this is a hospital wing Ms. Tonks," reprimanded the tired matron, "and nobody is to see Mr. Potter until we determine what happened and he wakes up."

"WHAT HAPPENED!" shouted Tonks slowly losing her carefully controlled composure since seeing Harry disappear with Dumbledore hours previously, as the others in the wing looked on in slight shock and confusion, some just waking up at all the noise. "What happened was pretty clear cut ...First he broke through anti-apparation wards ...and then took two killing curses to save MY LIFE! I demand to see him this instant."

"Poppy, it is alright, let her see Mr. Potter," spoke the newly arrived Albus Dumbledore, followed by the rest of the Order members from the battle who had finally finished with the Ministry for tonight, as well as the three returning Weasley brothers.

“Albus, is that what happened?” asked Molly fearfully as she ran forward to hug her sons and then turned towards the old wizard expectantly, as Tonks quickly ran to the curtained off bed to see Harry ignoring the rest of them. Albus heaved a great sigh and nodded sending the room into a chaos that acted as the perfect distraction for the two young lovers.

It only took Tonks seconds to get to Harry’s side and hug and kiss him senseless despite his still unconscious state before she noticed a change in Fawkes’ song causing her to lean her face back and look as the color quickly started returning to Harry. She began crying tears mixed with joy and sorrow, that her lack of action forced him into this situation, but that he seemed to be impossibly alive. She gave him another firm hug and quietly whispered how much she loved him as the noise in the rest of the hospital wing seemed to be winding down when she felt his arms weakly rise to hug her back. Her eyes flashed open instantly and meet the beautiful green ones she thought she might never see again and started to cry softly.

“Oh Harry ...I love you so much,” she cried into his chest, holding him and an embrace so tight she never wanted to let go.

“I love you too Dora,” he whispered with great difficulty as he looked into the crying natural violet eyes of his girlfriend, and felt a wave of powerful emotion run through his body that felt very comfortable and similar to his magic.

“Good, then don’t you EVER scare me like that again,” she playfully scolded him as she gave him another kiss before standing upright, as shouts came from behind the curtain.

“HE’S AWAKE,” Remus’ was obviously the loudest and most celebratory, as he felt a familiar magic in the room and then heard Tonks’ scolding of Harry and put the pieces together.

Tonks had apparently moved away from Harry just in time as the curtains were vanished as several people rushed to his bed to see him awake for themselves pushing Tonks out of the way as they crowded his bed. Remus, Molly, Arthur, Poppy, and Minerva were the

first to reach him and gather him in a large group hug as they all let out their emotions, safe in the knowledge he was alive. Albus and several others didn't want to fight to get a turn, but Hermione was determined to reach her best friend and gathered him in a strong hug as soon as she had the room. Everyone was relieved to see Harry awake, and it showed in their faces as they looked upon him, some with a little bit of awe.

"Harry ...how?" asked Hermione after she finally relented with her embrace, seemingly bringing everyone back to how they all got here.

"Um ...well," started Harry, in no mood to talk about what he did right then and there with so many people around, as he looked around him slowly and deliberately trying to stall for time, and being rescued just in time, only in the worst way.

"Okay, you've all seen him. You should all go to bed now, you can ask questions in the morning, but first I need to examine my patient and you all need your rest, so it's time to step back and give me my space," scolded Poppy after finally getting over her own shock at his recovery as she pushed everyone away.

"Uggh," groaned a resigned Harry, knowing there was no point in arguing with the no nonsense hospital matron he had gotten to know quite well over his last five years at Hogwarts, but silently pleased for the disruption of his interrogation. He spotted Ron, Dean, and Neville on adjacent beds and gave them all a small wave and grin before letting his head fall back and catching Tonks' eye for a split second and being rewarded with her happy smile.

"You sound just like your father," laughed Remus with a relieved smile and reminiscent gleam in his eyes as the others joined in laughing happily.

"Thanks Moony," replied Harry with a scratchy voice and a genuinely happy smile on his face as he looked at all the faces of his friends and knew they were safe. He imagined his dad complaining the same way after a prank gone awry and most likely along with Sirius and Remus, giving the nurse no end of grief.

Harry laughed silently to himself as everyone backed away from the bed and Madam Pomfrey began her series of magical scans as he let his mind wander a bit. Ever since the beginning of his Occlumency and organizing his mind this summer, he began to really appreciate everything he learned of his parents, the good and bad. It somehow made them more real, that they had problems and attitudes at times too. Plus, knowing that they were gone made him less self-conscious about any of their more disappointing traits. He could hardly blame James for his big-headedness or bullying attitude as a kid, when he himself was so moody and disgruntled at the same age. People do grow up, responsibility happens sometimes whether you choose it or it chooses you. With that perspective now, Harry realized that the responsibility of the Prophecy and the decisions he had made up to this point in the summer was all the proof he needed to show that kids do in fact grow up.

"You'll need to take this potion to help heal the burns on your hands," spoke Poppy in confusion after running her medical and magical scans, as she handed over a thick brown potion that looked and unsurprisingly tasted like mud.

"Is that it?" Harry asked hopefully, but curious as to the confused and frowning expression on her face.

"I think we all need to sleep now Mr. Potter. We will continue this in the morning," she finished tiredly, but still with the confused frown on her face. "Here ...have a small dose of dreamless sleep; it should help give you a few hours of rest."

"Thanks Madam Pomfrey," exhaled Harry gratefully, way too tired to think about Occlumency or nightmares right now, and actually feeling sufficiently exhausted to where he could probably sleep for more than his usual three hours.

"That boy," muttered the tired matron as she went around the room, giving everyone staying the night some dreamless sleep potion so everyone could get there rest, as she thought about the scans she had run, and watched the eyes of the Headmaster following her progress, looking for his own answers and knowing she had very little to provide.

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Harry woke slowly to the sound of whispered voices near the foot of his bed, a few hours later in the early light of the morning. He could tell that he wasn't supposed to be awake yet even if it was past his usual time for breakfast, so stayed quiet and tried to pick up the whispered conversation going on between the two now recognizable voices of Albus Dumbledore and Madam Pomfrey.

"...that's what I don't understand Albus ...his magic was almost non-existent when you brought him here ...Fawkes helped a little, but by the time he woke up and I ran the scans again, he was as good as new ...it doesn't make any sense," she trailed off confusedly as Harry realized the looks he received from her the night before, and tried to hear the Headmaster's reply.

"I'm afraid I too am at a loss, Poppy," started Dumbledore slowly and sadly, "however, none of his magical sensors have worked for weeks now, and when it did ...provided more questions than answers to what is happening to Mr. Potter."

"What kind of questions?" asked the nurse curiously, having rarely seen Albus so unprepared and in the dark on something.

"Perhaps another time Poppy, with Harry's permission," he replied kindly. "Please let me know when he wakes, we have some business to attend to that must be accomplished today, and I'd rather get it out of the way sooner."

"I'm awake sir," spoke Harry gruffly as his throat got used to speech again and he propped himself up in his bed, figuring he should come clean and let them know, before reaching for his glasses and putting them on in order to keep his corrected eyesight his own secret.

"Ah Harry," started the Headmaster kindly and with a knowing twinkle in his eyes after being caught by the boy. "I'm glad you are awake. Let me be the first to wish you a happy birthday."

"Thank you sir," responded Harry gratefully, as he remembered what today was with a content smile on his face.

"I was wondering if you were feeling well enough to accompany me to Gringotts, and then Headquarters," he replied somberly.

"H-Headquarters?" gulped Harry in slight panic, not really looking forward to visiting his dead godfather's house despite the fact that it was getting easier to think and talk about thanks to his foray into Occlumency.

"It will only take a few minutes, and you need not enter the house," started Albus kindly, knowing the young wizard's apprehension, but feeling the need to elaborate a little more. "I need you to claim ownership of the house, and then perform the Fidelius Charm before we can leave."

"Oh ...is that all?" laughed Harry hollowly, "You do know that I don't know the Fidelius Charm, right?"

"It is not difficult, and will take little time to explain, my boy," answered the twinkling eyes of the Headmaster. "I had Dobby fetch you a spare set of clothes from your trunk since nobody else can open it, why don't you get dressed so we can take care of these two stops and you can enjoy the rest of your birthday with your friends."

Harry quickly dressed and met up with his Headmaster, and after several warnings from Madam Pomfrey to take it easy, the two departed for Albus' office. From there, they used the secure Floo directly to Gringotts lobby, where they quickly found a goblin teller who escorted them to the now familiar office of Ragnok, the Goblin Leader. They entered the office to find the old and well respected Goblin speaking to another younger confidant that Harry immediately recognized.

"Hi Ragnok, Griphook ...it's good to see you both again," Harry greeted happily upon seeing the two familiar and friendly faces, at least for goblins anyway.

"Ah, Lord Potter Black ...it's good to see you as well ...and you too Albus my old friend," spoke Ragnok warmly as he watched the two very unusual wizards enter his office and greet him and his subordinates with respect that few wizards gave them.

"Please, just call me Harry," answered the teenage wizard honestly as he was motioned to take one of the two seats in front of the Head Goblin's large oak desk.

"Your attitude towards me and my race is very refreshing, Harry, and I hope it's just the beginning," answered the Goblin Leader hopefully.

"Me too sir," responded Harry respectfully, bringing a large smile to Ragnok's and Dumbledore's faces.

"Harry, do you want Albus here for this meeting, you are under no obligation either way," began Ragnok after he dismissed Griphook and turned to the two wizards before him.

"Yes sir," responded Harry, grateful to have Dumbledore's help with things he really didn't understand all the time.

"Than let's get started ..." began Ragnok as he pulled a large file from his desk and began to go through it. "First, I need one more signature to finalize the Emancipation now that you are sixteen years of age, a copy of which will be sent to the Ministry's Records Department, removing you from their underage tracking and magic usage laws."

"Yes," cheered Harry silently, but apparently not enough to escape Albus' or Ragnok's notice and offer chuckles of their own.

"...good," continued Ragnok after Harry affixed his signature to the Emancipation papers with a joyful flourish. "Now, I need you to put on the Black Family Ring, and then we can go over your assets, functions, and responsibilities associated with that title. I should warn you, that you will feel a small surge of magic through the ring which is commonly how most families pass down their magical inheritances."



“Oh ...okay,” started Harry as he watched Ragnok open a small black velvet box and slide its contents over the desk towards him.

It was a heavy silver ring with a large green stone, probably an emerald adorning its face with the Black Family Crest etched into its smooth surface. The ring was surprisingly very heavy and seemed to hum slightly and felt as if magic was radiating through it based on the warm feeling Harry got when handling it. With one final deep breath, he pushed the ring onto his left middle finger with an excitement building inside him echoed on the faces of the other two observers. The ring hummed loudly as it was put on his finger and filled him with an unusual yet somewhat comfortable feeling of magic that surged through his being, ending almost as quickly as it began and leaving the ring resized to fit perfectly.

“Truly remarkable,” breathed out Ragnok excitedly, having watched the Black Family magic absorb into the young mage and become accepted and integrated into his own already very powerful core seamlessly. “Now ...please sign these papers and seal them with the Family Ring stating that you have claimed your inheritance and received the Family Ring and vault keys which are right here for the Family Vault, vault number nine and Sirius Orion Black’s personal vault, number 489.”

“Now that those are signed and sealed, the Black Family assets are as follows,” continued Ragnok easily, pulling more documents from the seemingly never ending folder. “For vault 489 there are 50,423 galleons, 2,143 sickles, and 675 knuts, a motorcycle and traveling workshop trunk, and one personal trunk. Vault nine contains 4,872,541 galleons, 21,422 sickles, and 9,082 knuts. Three hundred and twelve rare books estimated at 1.1 million galleons, two trunks filled precious jewels and jewelry estimated at 5.2 million galleons, stocks and properties estimating 4.3 million galleons, and countless other weapons and family heirlooms. The total Black Vault contents are estimated at over 21 million making them one of the five wealthiest families in the wizarding world.”

“Uh ...okay,” stuttered Harry in absolute shock as he listened to the long list of assets that simply boggled his mind.

"I have a few more papers for you to sign and seal with the Black Family Ring, and a portfolio for you to take and look through at your leisure that detail all Black Family holdings and assets," continued Ragnok as he pushed the papers in front of Harry and briefly explained what each one was for. "Would either of you like some tea before we move on to the Potter Family business?"

"Yes Director, that would be excellent," answered the contemplative and relatively quiet Albus Dumbledore after getting a numb nod of Harry's head in agreement.

"Are you ready to continue Harry?" asked Ragnok after a tea service had been brought in and served and he watched the still somewhat numb young wizard absentmindedly nod his head in acceptance. "Good ...I'll begin with the Last Will and Testament of your parents ..."

"I, James Benjamin Potter, Head of the Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter, and my wife Lily Ann Evans Potter, being of sound mind and body, do hereby bequeath everything to our son and heir, Harry James Potter. Upon reaching adulthood, he will become the Head of House Potter as its only remaining descendant. We leave his guardianship until that day to his godfather, Sirius Orion Black. Please take care of him Padfoot; he is our entire life and our hope for the future. Remember Harry that we love you with all of our hearts, and the day you were born was the very best of our lives. We will always love you and look out for you wherever we are, and know that we are both proud to call you our son no matter what you do with your life, we will always love you son."

When Ragnok finished reading, Harry was overcome by the intensity of his emotions and began crying softly after the words of his parents he had so longed to hear resonated throughout his entire being. He had always wondered about what his life was like before October 31, 1981, and now he knew without a doubt how much his parents truly loved him. It filled him with a renewed hope and determination that reinforced his desire to survive this war and continue the Potter Family line. They had given up so much for him, and he would not let their loving sacrifice be in vain if he could help it. With a renewed strength of will, Harry slowly composed himself and then lifted his

gaze to meet the bright yellow eyes of the ancient goblin who was waiting patiently and giving the young wizard all the time he needed to get it together.

"Thank you Ragnok," spoke Harry hoarsely and honestly as his face took on the composed and driven visage that Harry felt burning throughout his being.

"It was my pleasure Harry," responded the aged goblin. "Your parents also left a private letter for you to open at your convenience," he continued as he handed the young wizard a heavy old envelope addressed to him which he quickly pocketed close to his chest for safe keeping.

"I also have the Potter Family Ring, the keys to vaults two and seven, and several things for you to sign and then seal with the Potter Ring," added Ragnok as he handed over a stack of parchments with two gold ceremonial vault keys and a large gold ring with a sparkling red ruby on its face with the Potter Family Crest etched onto its smooth surface.

Picking up the ring first and examining it carefully as it slowly began to hum, Harry took a deep breath and slowly slid the heavy and magically charged ring on his right hand's middle finger where it immediately started to heat and glow an eerie fiery reddish-orange. For several moments, Harry watched the glowing ring wondering what was about to happen when an electric charge suddenly spiked through his body causing an aura the same fiery red color to appear all around his body and made him feel like he was burning from the inside out. Slowly the static energy and burning sensation started to subside, and in a final flash of red, the glowing, burning, and humming ceased leaving a panting Harry to stare wide eyed at the current source of all that magic that now rested peacefully and perfectly on his finger.

"Harry, are you alright?" asked Albus worriedly as he examined the young wizard he cared so much about, trying to judge his reactions.

"Yeah ...actually, I feel great ...just a ...little winded," he answered between heavy breaths while wondering himself why the Potter Ring

had felt so much more powerful, before he collected himself and set to signing and sealing the papers before him.

“Now that all those are signed,” started Ragnok minutes later, hoping to continue since they still had a ways to go. “Vault number seven is the Potter Family Vault, which contains 4,652,109 galleons, 8,146 sickles, and 2,876 knuts. Seven hundred and twenty three books or scrolls estimated at 2.9 million galleons, two trunks filled with precious jewels and jewelry estimated at 2.3 million, stocks and properties estimating 10.7 million, and countless other weapons and family heirlooms including a personal trunk deposited by Albus Dumbledore dated November 1, 1981.”

“What?” interrupted a wide eyed Harry as he turned to look at his Headmaster questioningly.

“Yes Harry ...that trunk contains what little I was able to salvage from the destruction at Godric’s Hollow,” started Albus Dumbledore sadly to the wide eyed teenager. “It is not much Harry, and their wands were illegal for you to possess as an underage wizard. I am truly sorry that I had not told you of its existence, but I did not want to unnecessarily get your hopes up.”

“Y-You mean ...you were able to save some of their things?” asked Harry hopefully, too excited to have another connection to his parents to be angry at his secretive Headmaster.

“Yes, my boy,” replied a relieved Dumbledore at the look of joy and excitement on the young wizard’s face.

“Thank you sir,” responded Harry sincerely.

“Don’t mention it Harry,” responded the Headmaster gratefully.

“The Potter Family holdings are estimated at 28.7 million galleons,” continued Ragnok into the silence that followed, hoping to get through this next part as easily as the last. “Vault number two, became part of the Potter Family in 1160, as the last remaining descendants of the Gryffindor Family.”

“What?!” gasped Harry in disbelief.

“Yes, I’m afraid so Harry,” started Ragnok sympathetically before continuing, “Wilhelm Potter married Gabrielle Gryffindor in 1007AD, their descendant Benjamin Potter and his new wife fled England after the Slytherin Family’s extermination of the Gryffindor Family began in 1120 and lasted 38 years, until they were the only two remaining. By 1160, they along with a young son returned to England and were able to seal all evidence that connected them to the Gryffindor Family in vault two and set it up to run on its own. From then on, they only used the Potter Vault, but every generation of Potters is asked to visit Vault two upon birth, reaching adulthood, and marriage. Your father took you seven days after your birth on November 6, 1980, and today you will be returning as an adult, and hopefully it will be some time before you show up with a wife or heir,” finished Ragnok with a slight chuckle at Harry’s look of shock and slight blushing of his cheeks that he hoped nobody pressed him on.

“The Gryffindor Family Vault, number two contains 108,563,147 galleons, 33,129 sickles, and 13,491 knuts. Also ownership of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Hogsmead Village, and the Village of Godric’s Hollow, the Sword of Gryffindor which suspiciously went missing three years ago, the Journals of Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw, as well as 2,125 rare and priceless books and scrolls of antiquity,” finished Ragnok grandly and with a small smirk on his face at the expressions of the two wizards sitting before him.

“Gryffindor’s Sword?” asked Harry curiously before turning to his Headmaster questioningly. “Isn’t that the same sword I used in the Chamber of Secrets?”

“Ah,” sighed Ragnok thankfully. “We had hoped that was the case when it all of a sudden disappeared from a vault that hadn’t been opened in over ten years.”

“Yes,” answered the amused Albus Dumbledore, “Harry summoned Gryffindor’s Sword to come to his aid just about three years ago ...and has since been residing in my office for safekeeping.”

“Wonderful,” responded Ragnok, not wanting to be blamed for losing a priceless artifact of the Hogwarts’ Founder as he breathed a little easier. “You have one more stack of documents to sign, and then we can be considered done.”

“Great,” responded Harry with a severely cramping writing hand, but large smile on his face as he addressed the others in the office, “then can I visit my vaults?”

“That you can,” responded Ragnok happily, “I’ll call Griphook back to escort you while you finish signing.”

After another ten minutes and several signatures later everything was completed with the emancipation and inheritances, and Harry was being led by Griphook into one of the Gringotts carts to visit his vaults. The familiar pair made their way to the first of four vault stops at Sirius’ personal vault number 489. After conjuring a temporary key ring to hold his four new vault keys, and handing them to Griphook, he entered the vault. Ignoring the pile of money in the center of the vault, Harry went and checked out the motorcycle he remembered from some of his early childhood dreams. He loved the shiny metallic chrome that adorned the clean and simple looking bike, and after finding a trunk with the words ‘Bike Workshop’ on it, opened it. He followed the directions to open the garage compartment of the Workshop Trunk, and wheeled the bike inside before closing it up and shrinking it to bring home with him. He also located Sirius’ personal school trunk which he shrunk and added to his pocket with the other before going back to the cart and continuing on his vault tour.

The cart continued for several more minutes, going much deeper underground than Harry had ever been before, making more and more turns and dips as the vaults became further spread out from their neighbors. A large and steep drop of the cart brought them down into a very wide and expansive chamber with one of the oldest and fiercest dragons Harry had ever seen chained in the room’s center. The creature’s large yellowish-green eyes immediately locked onto the teenage wizard as a small puff of smoke flared out of his nostrils in a move to scare and intimidate any who ventured this far.

“Do not worry Lord ...sorry, Harry. He will not attack you as long as you are accompanied by a Gringott’s employee,” spoke Griphook with a smirk, obviously enjoying teasing the young wizard.

“Oh ...good,” breathed out Harry in relief as he watched the enormous prehistoric lizard maneuver in the large cavernous chamber to maintain his intense study of the young wizard’s movements as they circled the track that ran the circumference of the circular space.

“Here we are at the Black Family Vault, number nine,” spoke Griphook breaking the staring match between wizard and dragon and leading Harry to an ornately carved large stone door bearing the Black Family Crest upon its surface. “Just place the hand with the Black Family Ring on that small circle next to the Crest ...you’ll feel a slight rush of magic as the vault accepts you.”

Harry did as instructed and waited in awed fascination as the heavy door clunked open after a small pulse of energy ran through his body and left him standing in the entranceway of an absolutely enormous vault. Countless piles of galleons dominated the large cavernous room with various trunks and other items spread around the stone walls. One whole wall was covered with overflowing bookshelves causing Harry’s smile to widen as he thought back to his reading on The History of Parceltongue, and the few journals sold to the Black Family. Finding a relatively empty old trunk, he methodically began to fill it with several volumes of interest as he made quick work through the bookshelves. Within half an hour, he was finishing with the last of it when he came across the six Parceltongue Journals of Kaleb Peverell and the ten of Diabolus Peverell buried almost behind the most hidden shelf towards the back. Quickly adding them to his collection, he finished up and shrunk the now filled trunk before pocketing it and leaving the vault to find Griphook patiently sitting in the cart going over files.

“I’m ready Griphook,” spoke Harry in acknowledgement as he approached the cart and helpful goblin.

“Step in, and we’ll continue to the Potter Family Vault,” answered the waiting goblin easily before tucking his papers away for later.

Barely had the cart begun moving along the large circular chamber when it abruptly stopped again, this time in front of vault seven. Griphook instructed Harry to do the same to enter this vault, and after putting his hand with the Potter Family Ring onto the small circle next to his Family Crest, he waited as the stone door clunked open to reveal an equally sized vault as the last. The only difference was that now two walls were dominated in bookshelves, and countless more personal trunks stacked in various places around the room.

Going right for the trunk that Dumbledore described earlier of everything salvaged from Godric's Hollow, he opened it to be sure before quickly snapping it shut as his heart began racing in both anticipation and apprehension at what he might find. He knew he had the right one, and wanted plenty of time to go through it on his own, so shrank it and added it to his now growing collection of trunks in his pockets. He also went through the other various trunks around the vault, and came across two more that he decided to pocket for later and one that would serve well for the books that he then went towards.

Harry filled the trunk to capacity with countless books on Transfiguration, Charms, Dueling, and many others including a few old histories, one in particular written by Benjamin Potter. He hoped it might answer the Gryffindor-Potter connection better since it still didn't make much sense to him. Once finished with the books, he left the vault to find his escort working through papers which he quickly stashed away and turned towards his client.

"Okay Griphook ...one more to go," spoke Harry somewhat tiredly and starting to hunger as it approached lunchtime of an already long and exhausting day.

Getting into the cart again and slowly moving around the circular entry chamber, they came to a final stop in front of two very old stone doors with griffins carved on their surface standing on their hind legs facing one another. After again being instructed to put the hand with the Potter Family Ring against the indicated circle and state his name, Harry did as told and felt a much stronger pulse of magical energy tear through his body for only a second leaving him slightly winded as



a loud crack signified the doors opening leaving a cloud of dust in its wake that obscured the view into the ancient vault. Waiting for the dust to settle, for some reason that Harry didn't understand but felt important, he finally entered the Founder's vault to find it easily twice the size of the previous two, and filled with more books than Harry had ever seen in one place.

Ignoring the piles of gold, jewels, and galleons, Harry searched the few old trunks lining the walls in front of the many bookshelves. Finding one trunk with several large pieces of dragon hide, and other materials, and another with old sets of leather vests pants, boots, and wand holsters, he combined them into one, and used the other to begin loading up the books he wanted. He worked as quickly as possible, until he felt an inescapable pull towards the back of the vault, and a large raised podium upon which stood a large opened book. Harry's curiosity, mixed with remembering something Ragnok said about coming to this vault as an adult and a deeply engrained need to understand this pull he felt, led him straight to the podium and the ancient looking book.

Once Harry stepped upon the platform, a slight red glow began to emanate from the opened book, and in stepping towards it Harry subconsciously held out his arm palm up for only a second before in a flash of light, Gryffindor's Sword appeared in his hand glowing the same red color as the book. Acting on seeming auto-pilot, Harry touched the sword to the open book and felt what he now knew as the familiar feeling of Gryffindor's magic rush through his body at an alarming rate. He didn't know what he was doing, but somehow knew not to let go of the sword or break the connection with the book until whatever this was, was over. In a final surge and flash the glow and magic dispersed, dropping a now panting Harry to one knee as he tried to calm his breathing and stay balanced.

Once he was able to stand up properly, Harry felt an overwhelming rush and tingle of magic within him and an enormous hunger come over him. He quickly decided to head back, figuring he could always come back to the vaults later now that he did what he had to. He didn't even glance at the ancient book, as he found the sword's scabbard next to the raised podium, and put it away, leaving it with the book where it obviously belonged. He ignored the rest of the

things in the vault, knowing he needed to get a move on if he wanted to eat anytime soon. Finding Griphook still waiting in the cart, having seemingly finished all his paperwork from earlier, the two returned to the bank's lobby where Harry bid the friendly goblin goodbye.

Harry found Albus Dumbledore sitting patiently off to the side of Gringott's lobby quietly reading a large tome as he waited for his young charge to conclude his business. Harry was amazed at how quickly he had gotten over his anger towards the Headmaster, but watching him now, he realized why. Albus Dumbledore was by all purposes, whether through blood or not, his grandfather. He had always looked out for him, and regardless of the outcomes, his intentions were always good. Watching him now reading peacefully as he waited for him, brought a sense of contentment and family to Harry he had missed since Sirius' death. That he still had adults who looked out for him, cared for him, and fought for him meant everything, and not for the first time wondered if he would ever get the chance to live as long as Albus and effect so much positive change on generations of wizards, while still remaining true to yourself and youthful in spirit.

"Ah Harry, are you ready for our quick trip to headquarters?" asked the aged Headmaster pleasantly with twinkling bright blue eyes as he marked his page, shrunk the book and pocketed it in his robes.

"Yes sir?" answered Harry somewhat skeptically.

"Good, I was hoping you could apparate to the park across the street from headquarters," started Albus with the customary twinkle in his eyes as he studied the younger wizards' reaction.

"A-Apparate?" questioned Harry nervously, having never mentioned it to anyone but Tonks, and not wanting to think she told anyone.

"We all saw you apparate last night through anti-apparation wards Harry, and something tells me that it wasn't your first time," replied Dumbledore with a look of pride shining on his aged and wrinkled face.

“Oh ...yeah, I forgot about that,” he replied embarrassedly as he remembered what caused him to do so, and shuddered and had to shake his head clear to suppress what could have happened. He didn’t want to think about what could have happened if he didn’t protect Tonks from those killing curses, and took a few deep breaths to calm and center him.

“It’s quite understandable my boy,” replied the aged Headmaster warmly, “it is one of the less remarkable thing you accomplished last night. Nevertheless, can you give me ten seconds to secure the park before you follow me?”

At Harry’s nod, the old man smiled kindly and knowingly before disappearing with an almost inaudible pop. Harry stood in silence for several seconds before clearly picturing the small and dilapidated park near Grimmauld Place and disappearing from the apparation room of Gringott’s in equal near silence. Arriving in the small park, Harry instantly saw Dumbledore several meters away from him smiling knowingly as he watched Harry quickly gain his bearings.

“Splendid Harry,” he started with twinkling eyes, “truly splendid ...I take it you have been practicing quite a bit to get to that level of control and noise?”

“Yes sir,” answered Harry honestly, knowing there was little point in lying to the Headmaster who seemed to already know and wasn’t holding it against him. “I have been training with Tonks a lot this summer.”

“I guessed as much, and am quite pleased with what I have seen this summer,” replied Albus openly, and with his customary twinkle. “Has Auror Tonks been a good instructor?”

“Yeah, Tonks is an awesome teacher, she really knows her stuff ...especially Defense and Transfiguration,” he responded happily to the Headmaster’s growing twinkle as they approached the front door of Number Twelve Grimmauld Place.

Dumbledore discreetly checked his temporary muggle repellent and dark magic protection wards to find everything undisturbed, and

silently led Harry to the large front door as he explained what Harry needed to do. First he had to claim the house as the Head of the Black Family, and then they could cast the Fidelius Charm. After finding the faded almost non-existent Black Family Crest engraved on the heavy oak front door, Harry did as instructed and placed his ringed hand over it.

“I Harry James Black-Potter, as rightful heir to the Noble and Ancient House of Black, claim ownership of the House of Black.” Started Harry as a strong tingle of magic seemed to seep through the door up his arm and into his body before a flash of purple sealed the magical inheritance ritual on the Black Family House as the Crest continued to glow the same dark purple.

“Very good Harry, now cast the charm while maintaining contact with the crest and me,” spoke Albus warmly as he placed a reassuring hand on Harry’s shoulder helping to keep him calm.

“Ego pono mi fidelia en tu,” (=I place my faith in you) spoke Harry slowly and clearly with one hand still on the glowing purple Crest and the other covering Albus’ on his shoulder as the powerful love and faith based magic hummed through the two wizards for a long moment before a flash of white light caused Harry to close his eyes and stumble backwards a few steps from the house.

Upon opening his eyes, Harry looked around confused, wondering what had just happened and what that weird nagging of a recent memory was when Albus Dumbledore conjured a quill and parchment and wrote a small phrase before handing it to him. Taking the scrap of paper curiously, Harry read the words ‘the House of Black and Order of the Phoenix Headquarters is located at Number Twelve Grimmauld Place’ in the Headmaster’s flowing script, before the last few minutes came back to him in a flash, along with the large house that seemingly appeared out of nowhere in front of him.

“Splendid work Harry, are you now ready for some lunch at Hogwarts with your friends?” asked the aged Headmaster with a happy smile on his face at the completion of their successful job before burning the parchment and digging through his robes’ pockets.

“Absolutely sir,” responded Harry eagerly, glad to be getting food, especially at Hogwarts.

“Here we are,” he continued as he pulled out a chess rook and tapped it with his wand causing it to glow a light blue for a moment before holding it out to Harry to grab as well, “Hogwarts.”

The pair arrived in the familiar circular office of the Headmaster to find it relatively quiet as the portraits hushed upon their entrance. Fawkes however, let out a happy cry upon seeing her company and received grateful greetings of appreciation from the two wizards before they headed out of the office and towards the Great Hall. Harry was anxious to get some food and make sure everyone was really okay from yesterday’s attack on the Burrow. His thoughts must have been broadcasting, since before arriving at the Great Hall, the Headmaster turned to him.

“I was told that your three dorm mates would be let out of the hospital wing for lunch,” spoke Albus knowingly as they walked the deserted halls both lost in thought.

“That’s brilliant!” exclaimed Harry gratefully.

“Yes ...it is,” responded the old wizard, “there were many brilliant things that happened last night Harry...”

“Oh ...yeah ...that,” mumbled Harry uncertainly.

“Yes Harry ...that,” responded Albus seriously, “did you know what you were doing at the time?”

“Yeah, I think so,” started Harry uneasily. “I mean, I didn’t know if blocking the curses would work ...but I had to do something ...but I’m not really sure what that something was”

“I figured as much Harry. Well, as far as I can tell ...you seemingly ripped out your magical core, and used it to block the killing curses,” continued Albus seriously, and with a somewhat reluctance in his voice. “When you were brought here, your magic was almost non-existent, less than a squib, and I feared it would stay that way forever

because of how you used your magic to protect you. But with Fawkes' help your magic slowly returned to you, but even that shouldn't have been enough, and according to Poppy was not enough. However when you came to, she tells me your magic was already fully restored, something I find most unique given your previous visitor and the reason you were there in the first place."

"You mean Tonks?" asked Harry with a sense of dread beginning to fill him if the Headmaster found out how they truly felt about one another. "What about her?"

"I do not know Harry, but I do know that neither Poppy nor I have any explanation for either your survival or recovery, and I was hoping you could help me understand it better," continued Albus curiously.

"I don't know sir," started Harry reluctantly, not knowing how to express everything without incriminating his relationship with Tonks, and thankful he was walking next to the Headmaster and not looking him in the eyes. "...I guess I just figured the Prophecy prevented anyone but Tom from killing me, so maybe that's why I survived and the recovery I don't really remember anything before waking up to Tonks' scolding at my stupidity. Maybe knowing she was safe, since she was the one I was protecting did something ...but I don't really know," answered Harry, hoping the Headmaster would buy that excuse for now, even though he no longer felt any negativity towards Dumbledore, that didn't mean he needed to know all of his secrets, and especially the one's about Tonks.

"Perhaps Harry," answered Albus contemplating that theory, and the wizard next to him before the pair neared the Great Hall doors and bringing their private conversation to a close for now. "Shall we?"

The excited chatter of the Great Hall came to an abrupt end as the main doors opened to reveal the Headmaster and Boy-Who-Lived strolling casually towards the large group of already eating witches and wizards. The Hogwarts teachers, Order members, and the many refugees were shocked silent for several seconds until several red heads and one bushy headed member of the group jumped to their feet.

“Harry!” shouted several people when they recovered enough to realize who was there, and grateful to see him out of the hospital wing since he wasn’t around all morning.

He was almost immediately engulfed in several hugs and given birthday greetings from Molly, Hermione, Ginny, Tonks, and even Minerva all of whom were at varying levels of hysterics. Hagrid and Molly were easily the most emotional of the group, while Tonks was easily the most relieved at his return, bringing a heart warming smile to his face. After everyone’s greetings, many people wished him a happy birthday as they all sat down and continued lunch, everyone shooting him occasional smiles and well wishes.

“How are you Harry? Where did you go? What happened last night?” Hermione rattled off the moment he sat down to eat and started filling his plate.

“Later okay ...I’m starving,” answered Harry as he tore into his food with a vigor few had ever seen from the lithe boy, as conversations slowly began again.

“Now that we are all finished,” started Albus over the growing chatter of many since they had completed their meals. “I would like everyone to gather on the front steps so we can go to headquarters.”

“Are we not able to go back to our homes?” asked Augusta Longbottom curiously.

“Unfortunately, all of your houses except the Burrow were destroyed,” started Albus sadly. “However, we were able to save most of your belongings thanks to some very courageous house elves and have them stored in trunks you can go through later ...but for now, I would like everyone to prepare to leave for headquarters in twenty minutes.”

“Is headquarters safe again Albus?” asked Mad Eye Moody skeptically as he tried unsuccessfully to remember where exactly headquarters was.

“Yes, Harry and I took care of that this morning,” he responded cheerfully at the several blank looking faces all trying to remember headquarters location. “See you out front in twenty minutes then.”

AN: Chapter 14 ...YEAH! Next, Birthday Party & Life at Grimmauld Place. Thanks to all! Sorry to leave you so long on the cliff hanger, but was a necessity for finishing this chapter.



## Chapter 15

3pm - July 31, 1996

A very large group arrived by the long rope portkey just before three in the afternoon in a secluded area of the park that Harry and Albus had arrived in earlier. After the Headmaster passed around a slip of parchment with the secret location of the Order of Phoenix Headquarters, the group cautiously made its way across the street towards Number Twelve Grimmauld Place in groups of four to five. Harry and the Headmaster in the lead group, were the first to reach the old Brownstone Manor, and quietly entered through the front door and waited in the entranceway for the rest of their group to arrive.

Once all the Weasleys, Longbottoms, DA members, and Order members had entered the house safely, they were told to adjourn to the kitchen to set up and discuss the plan for Grimmauld Place. The noise of so many people moving through the house however, quickly woke up the portrait of Mrs. Black which began shrieking at the top of her lungs as the curtains usually blocking her blew open. Almost at the same time, the house elf Kreacher popped into existence in front of his beloved Mistress almost protectively.

"We don't want no mudblood and blood traitors in my Mistress' House," yelled the small and wrinkled old house elf in a state of greater lucidity than any had ever seen from the usually crazy and incoherent elf over the shrieks of outrage from Walburga Black's portrait.

Almost immediately the temperature in the hall dropped several degrees as the air slowly became thick with a chilling hum of magical energy. A few quickly started to panic, wondering what the protective and crazy old house elf was doing, but several noticed the real source of the disturbance and were looking on in slight worry and awe.

"No Harry, don't," pleaded Albus Dumbledore, the first to realize what was happening as he watched his usually calm student erupt in anger at the presence of Kreacher and the screaming portrait of Mrs. Black.

His eyes began burning with an intense green fire as slowly everyone realized what was happening and backed away down the hallways on both sides to allow Harry to deal with this however he wanted, not wanting to stand in front of him when he looked like that.

“What are you doing in my house, blood traitor,” screeched the obnoxious portrait as everyone in the room quieted and backed away leaving only her abomination of a son’s godson standing in front of her. Had she actually paid attention, she would have seen the anger and pain battling in his eyes, and probably wouldn’t have goaded him, but then again maybe she would have anyway ...it’s rather boring as a portrait.

“This blood traitor OWNS this house you bitch,” spat Harry venomously, trying with all his might to keep control of the fury of emotions storming within him, and then unsuccessfully snapping at her continued ranting. “Goodbye Mrs. Black ...REDUCTO!”

The explosion that shook the entire house was eerily reminiscent to last night’s battle and the falling of the wards, but in this case the wards were fine, but the wall upon which Mrs. Black’s portrait previously stood was now a cloud of dust and debris. Several people yelled out in panic, but an ear splitting cry of anguish and pain erupted through the settling debris that was practically fog leaving many to wonder what was truly happening.

“NOOO!” screamed Kreacher maniacally as he felt the destruction of the magical portrait he had served in his being and quickly turned on its destroyer almost immediately. Another pop sounded before a flash of light blinded those already obscured by the debris cloud of fog causing everything to go quiet. When the fog and light finally cleared, everyone present was able to see a younger and oddly dressed house elf standing protectively in front of an unhurt but surprised Harry Potter as the dead body of the old elf Kreacher lay at its feet.

“Is Harry Potter sir alright?” asked an emotional Dobby to the young wizard he had just killed a fellow house elf to protect, and finally taking in the scene and all the people around them.

"Yes Dobby ...thank you," whispered Harry gratefully to his small friend who had come to his aid again as he smiled down upon him his anger immediately evaporating, not knowing really what had happened but thankful none the less for Dobby's help.

"You is most welcome Master Harry Potter sir," squeaked the excitable house elf as he latched on to Harry's legs and hugged with all his might as he started wailing loudly. "Dobby will protect you sir."

Harry ignored the many nervous and confused looks he was getting as he awkwardly patted the crying house elf's shoulder to calm and comfort him. After a few seconds, Harry leaned down and asked Dobby to come speak with him once he was back from his afternoon Martial Arts class. Getting an excited nod of the still sniffing elf's head, Harry smiled again and thanked Dobby before heading towards the kitchen as Dobby, the now deceased Kreacher, and the left over debris from the wall and portrait's destruction all disappeared with a snap of the excited elf's fingers. The hallway was now empty, except for the still gaping hole through which you could see the formal dining room that was obviously behind the old portrait. Continuing to ignore the looks of everyone else, Harry slowly walked the rest of the hallway towards the kitchen and sat down at the large table before he put his head in his hands and took several deep and slow breaths to calm him as everyone else slowly and silently started filling the table around him. Once everyone was seated, Albus Dumbledore cleared his throat to get everyone's attention, and focused back on the tasks at hand.

"Harry, I know you are angry, but you must learn to control your temper before it controls you. It was fortunate that Dobby was able to be here," started the old Headmaster wisely and carefully, "are you planning to hire him later today?"

"Yes sir," answered Harry flatly, his breathing and temper well under control again.

"Harry how could you?" screeched Hermione in outrage, "its slavery!"

"It's actually quite simple Hermione," started Harry still a little upset, but with a calm detached tone that further infuriated the bushy haired

book worm. "I now owe Dobby a life debt, and I am quite sure what he will ask me for repayment ...besides, he basically bonded to me the moment I freed him from Lucius, he would become my house elf regardless."

"But its wrong," huffed Hermione indignantly.

"So are most things in the wizarding world, the blood purity nonsense being lead by a half-blood, the average wizard's beliefs of superiority over others, racism and bigotry at practically every level of society and government, and unjust Ministry Officials abusing their power. Hell, most of our adventures have been completely wrong on so many levels, both from what we encountered and that we children were the ones encountering it. Or even our own schemes like making Polyjuice Potion second year in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom to infiltrate Slytherin's Common Room," started Harry hoping that would his own tirade would keep people busy for a bit to let him think in peace.

"You did WHAT?!" demanded Minerva McGonagall as she followed the argument between two of her favorite students with everyone else in the kitchen, and couldn't believe her ears.

"It was no big deal Professor," started Harry nonchalantly, "we were young and stupid, and learned many valuable lessons in the process."

"And what lessons were those?" asked the narrowing eyed animagi as she glared at her students threateningly causing Hermione to audibly gulp and sink into her chair while Harry continued to look back impassively.

"The lesson Hermione learned after successfully brewing a NEWT level potion was that Polyjuice and animal hair don't mix, while Ron and I got to experience the benefits of Polyjuice and learned the location and inside layout of the Slytherin Common Room, where the Malfoy's hide their illegal Dark Arts stuff in their house, and later learned about Moaning Myrtle's death, and eventually the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets, not to mention a great place to get away from bothersome teachers and students ...I mean nobody goes in

there ...EVER,” answered Harry ominously rattling things off the top of his head, not the least bit worried about incriminating himself or his friends in this environment.

“B-b-b ...but ...how?” stuttered Minerva uncharacteristically as she gaped wide eyed at two of her favorite students in disbelief and a little horror, wondering how they got into these types of messes.

“Potter, I want full details about the Malfoy’s after we’re done here,” snapped Mad Eye looking all business at the moment.

“Sure Moody, Ron was there too,” replied Harry with a nod in his friends’ direction.

“Now ...” began Dumbledore kindly, trying to recapture everyone’s attention and hoping to avoid having his Transfiguration teacher lose it, “we have some room arrangements to determine, but I think we should speak to Dobby first to figure out how many we have to work with. Harry, I will take care of that this afternoon while you go to your lesson?”

“My lesson, I forgot,” jumped Harry looking at his watch and realizing he needed to get moving pretty soon.

“I’ll gather all the trunks together in the drawing room,” spoke up Remus who still had the house’s original possessions stored in several shrunken trunks he had been carrying around for several days, as well as the many trunks collected by the house elves.

“I’ll get started on supper,” added Molly Weasley, “once I get our food and equipment unpacked.”

“Very good,” answered Albus happily, “why don’t we retire to the drawing room and rest until we solve the rest of these issues.”

“I was going to head to class now, I’ll need the extra few minutes to stretch and warm up ...I’m still a little stiff from this morning,” spoke Harry as he stood up and draped his robes across his chair revealing the jeans and tee he wore under them before a look to Tonks to see if she was ready go.

“Just a little stiff?” asked Fred mockingly, getting a few chuckles from the men in the room, and exasperated eye rolls from the women.

“Ha ...ha, I’ll see you all at dinner,” finished Harry with a good natured glare at the twins that still carried enough of a small threat for them to keep quiet, knowing they were not making a general joke, but a rather personal geared towards him and Tonks’ relationship.

Harry and Tonks left shortly after saying their goodbyes and telling Moody to talk to Ron about the Malfoy’s Chamber, and arrived in the now very familiar hidden alleyway near Master Leung’s Dojo. After arriving, Tonks wasted no time in grabbing and kissing Harry hungrily, letting him know with her actions just how much he meant to the young auror, and trying to fit in all the kisses she couldn’t give him earlier when she woke and found him already running errands with Dumbledore. They kissed for several long moments as Tonks both berated and thanked Harry for his selfless actions of the previous night. They had to hurry in order to get to Harry’s lesson on time, giving him just enough time to get dressed and warmed up, and using the few extra minutes before class exactly how he had planned from the get go.

After a physically intense lesson, where everyone was happy to be back on schedule after the Martial Arts Tournament that weekend, Harry and Tonks took their time returning to the alley. They mostly shared the trip hand in hand and a comfortable silence, sharing only a few chaste kisses and rather enjoying the other’s company until it was time to return for dinner at Grimmauld Place. Harry wasn’t incredibly pleased about being back at that house, but knew he would have to get over it, it was his house now. He just hoped Dobby agreed to help; a good cleaning could do wonders for that dreary old manor and would probably even make it easier on Harry’s psyche.

“Happy Birthday Harry!” shouted several people as Harry and Tonks stepped into the previously dark and quiet kitchen, surprising the shit out of the young teenager who was so wrapped in his thoughts and hadn’t been paying much attention since apparating to his new house.

Harry was struck dumb at all the colors, banners, decorations, and happy faces of those filling the currently expanded kitchen. The total surprise was very evident on his face as he took in the scene of so many well wishers and friends, causing several of the guests to chuckle at his look of shock. Slowly regaining his bearings, a large smile lit up his face in excitement at having so many people that would want to celebrate his birthday. It caused his magic to respond as well, swelling first inside of him in no time at all, then emitting a strong pulse of magic that erupted out of him like a wave, filling everyone in the kitchen with an emotionally charged ancient feeling of great love and gratitude that tingled and resonated within them for several lingering moments.

“Thank you all so much,” whispered Harry hoarsely while trying to keep his emotions under control after the already long and draining day and hoping not to break down in front of so many others.

The intensity of the last twenty four hours or so was finally starting to catch up on the young wizard, and he had to try with all his might to keep his overwhelming emotions under control. Seeing everyone staying at the house, as well as most of the Order members was a real treat and the first birthday party he could remember having. Breaking out of his own thoughts, so that he could push the emotions aside and deal with them later, he was able to just enjoy the company and let come what will come.

“Thank you all,” he spoke again more clearly, starting the rush of greetings as everyone approached to congratulate him with a hand shake or hug.

After a whirlwind of greetings and congratulations, Harry was steered over to the table where a large feast had been prepared with many of his favorites. Dinner was a very rowdy affair thanks mostly to the Weasley twins who kept everyone entertained with stories of failed and successful prank items including a few demonstrations. Everybody tried to steer clear of talking about the Burrow attack or last night in Hogwarts’ hospital wing, for which Harry was grateful. He simply enjoyed sitting quietly and listening to all the lively conversations around him, only interjecting when asked something directly, too happy to be observing everyone else. Only Tonks really

noticed this having spent so much time around the young wizard over the last month, and figured that fatigue and emotions were probably the greatest cause, not to mention he still hadn't slept or rested much since last night's battle.

When dinner was over and cleared from the large table, Mrs. Weasley then floated a large chocolate cake to the table in front of the birthday boy with several burning candles adorning its top. After a rousing rendition of Happy Birthday sung by all, and none louder than Fred and George, Harry closed his eyes tightly and made his wish before blowing out the candles, an action he had witnessed Dudley perform countless times, but had never done so himself. After everyone had been served a piece of cake, and Ron came back for fifths, many presents were then floated to the table and put before Harry who had never had so much attention on him purposely, and was becoming slightly overwhelmed by the great many of people who cared about him.

"Come on Harry," started Fred excitedly.

"Open ours first," finished George as they handed a brightly wrapped large square box to their friend and investor.

"Is it safe to open?" asked Harry smartly and skeptically as he carefully examined it trying to determine its contents or if it was a prank.

"Of course it's safe," replied an indignant George.

"Don't you trust us?" added Fred with a mock pout.

So began the opening of presents, starting with the twins' sample box of Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes and a bottle of Firewhiskey since he was now an adult, and then Mr. and Mrs. Weasley's gift, a hand for their Family Clock. Then it was mostly a collection of books on defensive magic from Remus, Moody, Ginny, Hermione, and Neville, as well as several more from DA members that owed their gifts but got lost in last night's confusion. Hagrid gave him a carved wooden figurine of a stag that looked remarkably similar to Prongs and his Patronus that Harry adored, while McGonagall gave him a book



entitled Finding the Animal Within along with a note saying she would help him train to become an animagus this coming school year if he was interested. Professor Flitwick gave him something he would treasure the most, his own mother's Independent Charms Study Journal with all her notes and experiments that she worked on with the tiny Charms' Professor in her final year of Hogwarts.

Ron got him a box of Chocolate Frogs which he had to immediately open to test for the birthday boy. Professor Dumbledore gave him a box to open later, not wanting everyone to know what he gave his favorite student as well as avoiding a tradition that usually accompanied this type of present when gifted at a party such as this. After reading the Headmaster's note of explanation, Harry smiled and nodded before moving on to the last few. From Charlie, who sent his gift through Bill, Harry got a very incredible dragon hide vest that Charlie's note said had come from a recently deceased dragon at the preserve. His note went on to complain about most dragon hide being sold came from hunted and slaughtered dragons, and was an abomination to the beautiful creatures. His note also asked about the pictures Harry got of Bill when beating him at his own game a few days ago causing Harry to laugh out loud and shoot the oldest Weasley sibling a happy smirk.

Bill however, made up for it with his own gift, a book on Egyptian Magic and Runes, and a light weight linen pants and shirt set for his Martial Arts class. It was the same type outfit that most of his classmates wore, but with a large patch on the back and identical smaller patches on the left breast of the shirt and left hip of the pants. The patches were all the same image, the crest that Tonks had painted by Harry's apartment doors of the phoenix in flight marked with a lightening bolt. They were truly beautiful, and Harry was overjoyed to get something so practical and personal, and couldn't wait to wear them to tomorrow's class.

After thanking the curse breaker immensely, Harry returned to the last of his presents. The first was an exquisite set of dress robes in emerald green with black trim and a small Black Family Crest embroidered on its chest in a similar black thread. The gift was from the newest Blacks, Andromeda and Ted, who sent their thanks to their new Head of House and explained his need to have the robes

for the future. The final box was from Tonks, and Harry was rather excited to finally discover what she had got for him.

Unwrapping and then opening the box, he discovered several items of clothing, but unlike her parents, her gifts were all fun and muggle, and a little embarrassing in front of so many older adults. She got him another pair of leather pants, a few small looking shirts and sweaters that were supposed to be skin tight according to the smiling auror. She too got him an outfit for his martial arts class, which she left plain so he could use them as he wanted, but explained that she could put the patches on it just like Bill's. He also found a bottle of muggle massage oil at the bottom of the box that he thankfully was able to leave where he found it to prevent further embarrassment or anyone giving him or Tonks a hard time. All in all, he was quite happy with all the gifts, and made sure he thanked everyone again before the party slowly started moving into the drawing room where after dinner drinks were served to the remaining adults while the kids began playing exploding snap or chess in the case of Neville and Ron.

By eleven that night most people had wished Harry another happy birthday, and then returned to their homes for the Order members or retired to bed for those now staying at headquarters. Dobby had even shown up to wish Harry a happy birthday and give him his homemade present, a knitted pair of heavy mismatched socks. He told Harry how he had already cleaned and got the second floor bedrooms ready for the many guests who wanted to know where they would be staying while at Grimmauld Place. Dobby also mentioned that the three bedrooms on the third floor would be ready for Remus, Tonks, and Himself within a half hour so they could go to bed soon as well. Apparently, Dobby had been working non stop since this afternoon's incident with Kreacher, and had successfully cleaned and readied the many rooms for habitation.

Shortly afterwards, Remus went upstairs to bed leaving the younger group to hang out until almost midnight. Harry was talking with Bill, Fred, George, Tonks, and Ginny, while Ron and Neville played their seventh game of chess with Hermione watching and Dean and Seamus unsuccessfully were trying to rattle Ron into making mistakes. It wasn't quite midnight when Dobby returned from showing Remus his room now that it was ready, and asked to speak with

Harry in private. Following the small and very nervous looking elf back towards the kitchens, Harry had a pretty good idea what he thought was coming.

“Dobby is wanting to ask Master Harry Potter sir, if I can be your bonded personal house-elf sir?” asked the nervous little elf as he turned his orb like eyes on the young wizard’s green ones in a pleading manner and tightly twisted his dirty pillowcase in his hands.

“I would be honored Dobby,” replied Harry honestly as the little elf began bouncing on his feet excitedly as the largest smile Harry had ever seen spread across his face.

“Thank you Master Harry Potter sir,” squeaked Dobby.

“Please Dobby,” started Harry with a slightly embarrassed chuckle, “none of this Master or sir nonsense.”

“Yes Mas- ...Harry Potter sir...you is a great wizard sir,” squealed the excitable house elf.

“Thank you Dobby,” responded Harry kindly and with a small chuckle hearing Dobby praise his name, “and I guess sir is better than master.”

“Dobby is also wondering if Harry Potter sir would accept Winky as his elf. She is much better cook than Dobby, and she is not liking Hogwarts sir. She is wanting to be a bonded elf,” asked Dobby apprehensively to his new master as he wrung the old pillowcase outfit nervously.

“Is that what you want also, Dobby?” asked Harry sincerely.

“Yes Harry Potter sir,” nodded Dobby vigorously causing his ears to flap freely.

“Very well Dobby,” answered a smiling teenage wizard. “If you are in agreement, then I would be willing to accept Winky as well.”

POP

“Master is wanting to accept Winky?” asked the newly arrived female house elf that looked more happy and alive than Harry had ever seen.

“Yes Winky,” started Harry chuckling at her prompt arrival with the feeling he had just been set up by his own house elf, but still with a very amused twinkle in his eyes, “but when we are alone, I must insist that you call me Harry okay?”

“Yes ...Harry sir,” squeaked Winky happily.

“Harry needs to properly accept us now with an Oath,” interrupted Dobby who had not lost the look of overwhelming joy that graced his face and seemed eager to fulfill his life long wish of serving the Great Harry Potter.

“Oh ...okay,” breathed out Harry unsurely before deciding to just do a simple Wizard Oath. “I, Harry James Black-Potter, Head of Houses Black and Potter, do hereby accept the House Elves Dobby and Winky into my service, and the service of my family from this day forward, so mote it be.”

“So mote it be,” chorused two happy and bouncing house elves before a brilliant flash of magic passed between the three of them sealing the magical bonding.

“Is there anything you need Harry?” asked Dobby, the first to recover from the unusual flash of magic and subsequent makeover that they underwent, oblivious to the healthier look to him or the new outfits the pair wore bearing Harry’s personal Crest that Tonks created.

“Nothing for now thanks,” responded Harry easily and a happy smile at their new outfits. “In fact, I think I am going to go say goodnight to everyone and head up to bed soon, I’m feeling particularly winded tonight.”

“Of course Harry Potter sir,” started Dobby happily, “but let Dobby show you to your room when you’re ready.”

“Thank you Dobby ...and Winky,” he responded with a smile to the two happy looking house elves who still seemed oblivious to their changes, while Harry returned to his friends in the Drawing Room for one last game before heading to bed, or what was supposed to be one more game.

Just before one, Mrs. Weasley had come down and told everyone to get some sleep, so Dobby showed everyone to their respective bedrooms on the second floor. He then led Harry and Tonks up another set of steps to the third floor, where Tonks was shown her half master room identical to Remus’ while Harry was led to the master bedroom that previously belonged to his Godfather Sirius. The room was truly massive with a large sitting area with sofas, tables, and a large fireplace. Two doors led out of the entry area of the room, one to a bathroom that connected to Harry’s walk-in closet which further connected to the actual bedroom and brought you back into to the common area.

“Do you like it Master Harry sir?” asked Dobby nervously as he twisted the bottom of his new Potter Family outfit, a habit that was obviously very difficult to break.

“I love it Dobby,” responded Harry honestly despite the slight twinge of guilt that this once belonged to Sirius.

“Is Miss Tonks’ room not good enough?” asked a slightly fearful Dobby as he saw the owner of said room walk in while Harry was still looking around at everything.

“No, it’s perfect Dobby,” started Tonks with a growing smile, “I am just going to stay in here with Harry tonight.”

“Of course Missus Tonks,” replied Dobby with a matching smile that looked more like a smirk on the small house elf. “I will make sure that nobody can enter Master’s room,” he finished before turning to leave a red faced and blushing Harry and a happily laughing Tonks.

“Now it’s time for a real birthday present,” purred Tonks seductively into Harry’s ear as she came up behind him and wrapped her arms

around his chest, slowly tugging at and undoing his shirt and belt, “and something tells me that you are going to really like it...”

Harry woke up relatively refreshed just before dawn in a tangled mess of legs and arms, and after carefully extracting himself from under Tonks and out of his comfortable bed; he got dressed in running shorts and a t-shirt. Slipping on his shoes and then out of his bedroom to the second floor, he heard movement coming from one of the open doors in the hall. Waiting a few seconds, he recognized the voices of Hermione and Ginny as they too got ready for the morning run. When the trio got downstairs, Neville and Dean were already waiting, both with eager looks on their faces.

“We want to train with you too, Harry,” spoke Neville clearly and more awake than any of the others.

“Yeah, after the other night ...well,” started Dean somewhat timidly, but with a sense of determination that Harry had never seen from his roommate, including last year’s DA lessons.

“I understand,” added Harry respectfully, and not needing any further reasoning anyway. “There is a walking trail that starts at the park ...I thought we’d give that a try today.”

“Okay,” chorused three slowly waking teenagers, and one really excited Neville.

The run was truly invigorating for Harry as he pushed himself longer and faster as he scouted out the main trail and several others that splintered off it at various points until he had a good feeling for the area. He left Hermione and Ginny who were still both new to running to deal with Dean and Neville, knowing that their pace would be way too slow for him, but kept doubling back every so often to check on them and steer them through the park’s many paths. By the time the five teenagers returned from stretching at the park afterwards, it was almost eight and Molly had just arrived at the kitchen to find that Winky had already made breakfast for everyone. Once the kids showered and changed, or continued to work out in their trunk a little in Harry’s case before returning for breakfast, the Weasley matron

was at whit's end trying to work out time to cook for her family in what was now being called 'Winky's Kitchen.'

By the time Harry was in the shower and most had already begun breakfast, his bedroom's other occupant was finally awake and soon joined him. Harry was only slightly self-conscious as he showered, having already been intimate with Tonks, he was quickly starting to become more comfortable around the older witch. Being in a bed at night was different than in a shower in the early morning light of day, despite Tonks' lack of shyness in the area. He still sometimes found it hard to believe that someone so beautiful and fun was interested in him, and not simply because he was rich and famous. A large smile graced his face as his eyes trailed up Tonks' legs and body as she too washed her natural self and Harry once again thanked his lucky stars for the wonderful woman in front of him.

"Enjoying the show Harry?" she asked coyly, catching the staring teenager unaware before breaking out into giggles at his deer in headlight look ...literally. "You can help if you want?"

"Um ...really?" he stuttered unsure of how his mouth even knew what to do at this point.

"Of course you prat ...I've already let you do a lot more than that," she huffed playfully slapping him softly on the shoulder, helping to break him out of his daze. "Now ...how about we continue where we left off last night," whispered Tonks as she closed the distance between them easily before the pair got to enjoy the benefits of now living in the same house again.

"Good morning," chirped Harry cheerfully as he entered the kitchen for breakfast with a large smile on his face to be greeted by Dumbledore, Kingsley, Moody, and McGonagall who were visiting, as well as the inhabitants of the house minus only a still sleeping Ron and Seamus, and a yet to arrive Tonks.

"Harry, our OWL results have arrived!" squealed Hermione in near hysterics as she waved the offending letter clutched tightly in her hand as her parents and others watched on in amusement,

seemingly oblivious to Harry's goofy grin which was probably a good thing in this case.

"Calm down 'Mione," Harry chuckled in reply to her enthusiasm and also using it to cover his smiling face, "why don't you go wake up Ron and Seamus so we can all open them together?"

"Okay, great idea Harry," started Hermione as she immediately headed for the door with purpose to wake the late risers.

"What's all the excitement?" asked Tonks as she entered the kitchen with her usual spiky pink hair and upbeat attitude after the hasty departure of the over achieving prefect.

"OWL results," answered a sniggering Ginny as she watched the face of Neville grow paler by the second as he starred at his envelope made of the customary yellowish parchment of the Ministry's Examination Board.

"Ohhh!" cooed Tonks spookily, gaining several more giggles from those watching the teenager's plight, and a defeated groan from the still paling Neville.

Remus watched as Harry entered the kitchen happily, and sat down easily filling his plate and starting on breakfast after Hermione left to wake the others and Tonks arrived. He noticed almost immediately after she entered the room, and wondered why he didn't notice it on Harry, but the pair had recently been intimate with each other, and Remus' advanced sense of smell was going a little haywire. The events of the other night and this summer made so much more sense now that he understood that Harry and Tonks were together, and wondered how he didn't see the signs earlier.

Remus wanted to blurt out a question that he knew would embarrass the shit out of his young cub, but held himself off at the last moment when he thought about why they might be hiding their relationship. No doubt, Molly and some of the others would be a little upset over the age difference, but Remus didn't really mind that too much. Harry was always more mature for his age and Tonks was always less, so it pretty much balanced itself out in his mind. Besides, if they made



each other happy, who was he to bring it up in front of others? He would just have to talk to Harry and Tonks about it privately later, he thought as he finished his own breakfast and waited for the OWL scores to be revealed, hoping he would have some time to think more on this and organize his thoughts before he confronted either of them.

Hermione returned in a huff a few minutes after leaving saying that those two prats were taking their sweet time, and obviously didn't care about their futures. Harry didn't like her wording much, and paled slightly for a split second, having never really given much thought to a future he wasn't sure he'd ever reach. His future was wrapped up in the Prophecy and Voldemort, and until those things were resolved, there was little future to think about, but was determined not to let something as insignificant as OWL scores deter him in any way. Grabbing a plate and digging in to a large breakfast, Harry ignored his bushy haired best friend hypothesize about grades, classes, tests, and career prospects and instead shared a few secret looks with his girlfriend across the table as they waited for the last two to arrive.

Fifteen grueling minutes later, for Hermione at least, and all six former fifth years currently living at Grimmauld Place tore into their OWL results with varying levels of dread, excitement, or indifference. Hermione, who was easily the most eager, was also the most vocal by mumbling to herself as she read the attached results loud enough for the whole room to hear. Harry ignored her knowing she did quite well, and read his own letter with the same feeling of indifference he had upon spotting the offending parchment, and despite that, was rather surprised and quite pleased with his results.

Dear Mr. Potter,

Enclosed you will find your OWL results for the 1994-1995 Hogwarts school year. Where applicable, grades are listed as Theory – then Practical – then Overall – with your Class Rank in parenthesis (out of 40 students).

Astronomy – E – A – E (18th)

Care of Magical Creatures – O – O – O (1st)

Charms – E – O – O (3rd)

Defense Against Dark Arts – O – O – O+ (1st) Highest Recorded Score

Divination – A – A – A (12th)

Herbology – E – O – O (8th)

History of Magic – T (40th)

Potions – E – E – E (10th)

Transfiguration – E – O – O (7th)

Congratulations Mr. Potter on receiving 8 OWLS. You can take any OWL classes available, and have qualified for the following NEWT level subjects: Astronomy, COMC, Charms, DADA, Divination, and Transfiguration. Please select a minimum of four, but up to six classes from the following page and return to your Headmaster.

Sincerely,

Griselda Marchbanks, CEO

Chief Examinations Officer

Harry took a glance at the next sheet, and quickly marked off NEWT Care of Magical Creatures, Charms, Herbology, Defense, and Transfiguration. He then selected OWL level Ancient Runes which he was apparently allowed to take and was more interested in than continuing with Astronomy or Divination. He took a look around at his classmates to see how they did, and was unsurprised to learn that Hermione got all Outstandings, and eleven OWLs' since she didn't take Divination. Ron, Neville, Dean, and Seamus each got eight OWLs' as well, but only Outstanding scores in Defense for them all, and Herbology as well for Neville.

Everyone was quite pleased with their results, most having not expected to do that well, especially in Defense. They all knew they owed that grade to Harry and his instruction in 'Dumbledore's Army' and all thanked him profusely for his assistance. The adults seemed especially curious about their Defense grades, and just how good a teacher and Defense student was Harry Potter.

"I'm so proud and happy for all of you," squealed Mrs. Weasley excitedly after everyone told the kitchen at large their results, getting several congratulations from the rest of those gathered at the table, especially Remus who had taught them all in the past.

Remus was also one of the few that had always known about the DA as they liked to go by, and was very proud of what they were able to accomplish. He was amazed that every one of them received an 'O' on the practical DADA exam, and couldn't be prouder of Harry, knowing how hard teaching those kids could be. He would bet that Harry was easily the best teacher of the subject that any of them had ever had or would in the future. It was remarkable, Harry's affinity for Defensive magic. He never truly understood where it came from, true both of his parents were powerful and skilled wizards, but neither of them excelled in Defense, and their specialties were in other areas.

James was only a good dueler because of his natural affinity for Transfiguration, while Lily so excelled in Charms that she too was a formidable opponent. But neither had the survival instincts or battle training ingrained into them as their son, nor could their emotions have such a profound effect on their spells like Harry's did. Lily had bouts of anger that could power up her spells a little, but nothing like her son, whose emotions and magic seemed to work hand in hand. His happiness could truly lift up a whole room as it did last night at his birthday party, his anger could destroy buildings, his passion could incite children into leaders, and apparently his selflessness was rewarded by stopping and surviving two unblockable killing curses ...again.

"Thanks Mrs. Weasley," chorused several very pleased upcoming sixth years as she fussed over them all, making sure they had all been hugged and had eaten enough breakfast.

“Mr. Potter,” started Minerva McGonagall somewhat curiously, “are you still interested in becoming an auror? I can speak with Professor Snape about letting you into his NEWT Potions class.”

“Um ...no, not anymore thanks,” answered Harry honestly. “I don’t know what I want to do, but working for the current Ministry is not for me.”

“Very well Mr. Potter,” answered the strict Transfiguration Professor with a small reluctant nod of acceptance as others quickly jumped in and asked about future careers.

“Look,” answered Harry with a frustrated sigh, not wanting to get into all the reasons he’s not worrying about a future, but tired of the questions all the same. “I don’t want to think about future jobs or careers right now.”

“But Harry,” sputtered an exasperated Hermione.

“Just drop it Hermione,” interrupted Harry snappishly, not wanting to have this discussion at the breakfast table or ever for that matter.

“Are you still going to continue the DA, Harry?” asked a brave Dean a few moments later as several ears perked up waiting for the response.

“If everyone wants me too ...I think I would,” answered the raven haired teenager with a knowing smirk on his face, “although physical training will probably become a key component this year.”

“Uggh,” groaned Ron and Seamus, the two most set against any kind of exercise or anything that cuts into their precious sleep.

The laughter of several people seated around the table at the two slugs’ groans of disapproval quickly became contagious, and soon almost everyone was happily laughing at the looks on the faces of the late risers. The tension of the previous day was slowly being released, allowing the residents of Twelve Grimmauld Place to begin enjoying the time they had together. Harry said a quiet thanks to Albus for the birthday Penseive he finally opened this morning before coming down

for breakfast, and the Headmaster took several minutes to explain some of the intricacies of the helpful device.

After breakfast was over, several people began breaking off into smaller groups to talk, read, return to Hogwarts, or play games in most of the kids' cases. Only Harry remained at the table along with Remus, Tonks, and Molly who was quietly trying to clean up the kitchen before Winky popped in and took over from the distraught matron who used cooking as much as therapy as anything else, and didn't seem to know what to do with herself.

"So, what do you have planned today Harry?" asked Remus as he watched the young wizard sitting contently and slowly sipping the rest of his orange juice, wondering when he'd get the chance to talk to the two people next to him without listening ears around them.

"I was going to ask Tonks if she knew of a place we could practice our dueling," answered the green eyed wizard who spared a quick glance towards Molly who clucked in disapproval, but said nothing.

"That sounds like fun," smirked Remus with a look between the younger eager pair that was somewhat unsettling.

"Dobby knows a place for Harry and Miss Tonks to duel in the house," popped in Dobby all of a sudden with an excited glow to his orb like eyes as he stood proudly in front of his master.

"Really, that's brilliant Dobby ...lead the way," answered Harry with a growing excitement that seemed to match the small house elf's. "You want to join us Remus?"

"Sure," replied an amused and curious Marauder, wondering where this dueling place was hidden in the house having never known about it himself. Nor did he think Sirius knew anything about it when he grew up or he would have mentioned it or made use of it himself.

The group of Harry, Remus, and Tonks followed Dobby down the long stone steps off the kitchen towards the large and filthy old wine cellar. Looking around, they wondered what Dobby was talking about seeing nothing but old wine racks lining the even older stone walls.

They were answered by the happy elf oblivious to their disappointment as he walked towards one of the wine racks deep in the back and spoke.

“Duelling chamber is through secret door here Harry, but Dobby not knowing how to open door only pop into chamber,” spoke the proud elf despite not being able to figure out the door, since he had an alternate solution available in popping his master and his friends through.

“That’s alright Dobby, let me try,” answered Harry who was looking at a small and faded Black Family Crest engraved into one of the nearby wine racks and slowly lifted the hand with the Black Family Ring to it and simply spoke his name. “Harry James Black Potter.”

A loud clang of metal and grinding of stone followed the brief tingle of magic that the door recognized before opening. The wine racks in front of them shrunk to the sides to reveal a stone archway opening up in the wall behind them. Walking through the archway first, Harry noticed torches on the walls illuminate around him allowing the group to get its first glimpse at the Black Family dueling chamber.

“Wow!” breathed all three simultaneously as they took in the massive stone chamber in wonder and anticipation.

Harry was really glad that he would have a good place to train without having to give up his trunk’s secrets to everyone at the house. This would also be a great place to train with his friends if he wanted to get a jump start on the DA. After thanking Dobby who had already made sure the room was dust free and relatively clean being just a large circular chamber. Harry and Tonks started testing and then strengthening the protection wards on the walls, floor, and ceiling just as they had done at Privet Drive a month earlier while Remus just watched them at work. After adding cushioning charms as well and making sure Remus was fine just watching for now, the young pair began trading curses back and forth before the duel began.

Remus was once again amazed at Harry’s growing skills as the two continued to push one another, being on relatively even footing. He had heard about how well Harry had dueled with Amicus Carrows

the other night, but he couldn't really believe that the teenage wizard was so good. The Carrows siblings were both well known for their viciousness and skill, and were supposedly Unspeakables from the Department of Mysteries, although that was never confirmed. He had known that Harry had been training hard and had ample amounts of raw power, but he never expected to see the skill and knowledge with which he now displayed in dueling an auror no less. They both seemed heads above his own dueling skill, and were probably better than most in the Order minus only Albus, Moody, and maybe Bill.

By the time Dobby called them for lunch, Remus realized he missed his chance to confront the young couple about their relationship because he was so caught up in watching Harry duel, and settled himself to do so later. The two duelers went for quick showers before they sat down at the table to eat a hearty lunch. Harry devoured his, thanking Winky profusely for such wonderful meals since she arrived as many watched surprisingly at the raven haired wizard's appetite that most were just starting to get used to. Lunch with just the kids, Remus, Tonks, David, Emma, and Molly was rather quiet, and was spent mostly in small discussions about what classes everyone was planning on taking during the upcoming school year.

Harry surprised everyone by saying he would take OWL level Ancient Runes for something different since he wasn't planning on continuing with Astronomy, Potions, or Divination. The other four Gryffindor boys were all continuing with Divination, and taking the same other five classes as Harry. Hermione congratulated Harry on his decision to try Runes and offered him any help he might need. Ron wasn't too happy to not be taking all his classes with his best mate, but had absolutely no desire to do more work than necessary. Hermione had the hardest decision, and ending up selecting Potions, Defense, Charms, Transfiguration, Arithmancy, and Runes all at the NEWT level, and had to suffer with learning the other subjects in her free time, if she had any.

After lunch, everyone retired to the Drawing Room to play games or in Harry and Hermione's case, to pick back up with the books they were reading. Harry had just begun going through his account and vault summaries from yesterday's trip to Gringotts, trying to get a better understanding of his wealth and what was accessible to him.

He was still somewhat uncomfortable with the absolute enormity of the wealth when so many others were struggling, but was serious about learning everything he could that might help him down the road.

He discovered an old inventory of family wands in the Black and Potter vaults which he wanted to let his friends take a crack at, seeing at it was illegal to actually buy a second wand. All of them were basically stuck in Grimmauld Place now for the next month, and it gave them a great opportunity to practice new spells or at least start getting everyone into better physical shape. He also learned that all three of his family vaults had a Library Ledger book that catalogued or replicated any book in their collections, and he knew he would be going back for those soon. By the time of Harry's martial arts lesson, he had gone through all the vault inventories truly amazed at everything he owned, and now had all the properties, businesses, and investments to go through later.

Running upstairs to change into his new gi from Bill, he was ready to go just on time, and he and Tonks disappeared from Headquarters to reappear in the normal hidden alleyway. They quickly made their way to class, and had enough time for Harry to stretch properly before another interesting lesson. He was now working with Karen in class, having already worked with Malcolm and Michael, and was doing very well. He was easily able to hold his own, and win more often than not drawing plenty of praise from his surprised classmates and Sensei. By classes' conclusion, he was quite sweaty and tired, and looking forward to a nice hot shower and a few kisses as he left the dojo and began the walk back to the alley with Tonks.

Arriving at Grimmauld Place's entry hall, the pair split up, Tonks going to the kitchen, while Harry went for a quick shower and change of clothes. Dinner that night was smaller than the night before celebrating Harry's birthday, but now with Winky cooking for everyone, there was more than enough food to make up for it. Arthur, Bill, Fleur, George, Fred, Augusta, and Kingsley all joined the group that spent the day celebrating OWL results and the others not still going to work. Everyone ate their fill, thanking the happy and blushing house elf who broke down into small tears at the praise she received.



"I think I am going to spend the night alone in my room," started Harry as everyone began to finish up dinner, "I have a few things I need to go through."

"Are you sure you don't need help Harry?" asked Hermione curiously, wondering what her friend was up to since he had started keeping so many secrets this summer.

"Yes, I'm quite sure, thank you," answered Harry with a smile to those around the table and a small knowing nod to a pink haired auror hoping she would visit him later, "goodnight everyone."

Harry returned to his room, put a general lock on his door that he knew Tonks could get through, and went down into his multi compartment trunk where he had put everything from yesterday's trip to Gringotts. He brought all the trunks to the main room of the tent in the last compartment so that he had plenty of room to spread everything out and make piles for later. He enlarged the eight trunks and slowly approached the trunk that made him do this alone, the one from Godric's Hollow containing whatever remained of his parents.

Slowly lifting the trunk's lids, he saw the two wands of his parents resting comfortably on a worn muggle quilt. Picking up each wand carefully and looking at them closely, he felt a small hum of magic nowhere near as good as his own holly and phoenix feather wand so he set them both aside to remove the patchwork quilt. Below that the first things he came to were two framed wizard photos, one of Sirius and James trying to keep a one year old Harry hovering on a child's broom between them all with smiling faces at little Harry's obvious joy. The other picture was of James, Lily, and baby Harry in front of his first birthday cake while his parents doted over him.

Wiping the tears that started to form in his eyes as he watched the young couple and himself, he set the photographs aside as he removed the smaller of the last two boxes. The very small carved wooden gift box held two gold wedding bands and a beautiful diamond engagement ring with small emeralds on each side. The larger almost shoe box sized chest, looked like a miniature pirate's chest with leather and iron clasps as hardware. Trying to open it left Harry very frustrated as nothing he did seemed to work, either

magical or muggle. He was nearing the point of giving up when he noticed a faded Rune on the chest's top that looked vaguely familiar.

Trying to remember when he could have seen a familiar Rune, he thought back to a few weeks ago and the image of the Sanguis Bowl and ceremonial knife struck his mind since he had seen so few Runes in his life. Figuring he had little else to lose, he pulled out his pocket knife and cut into his palm allowing the blood to pool in his hand for a few moments before letting several drops fall right onto the familiar Rune. The bright red glow followed by a heavy click signified that it had worked followed by the lid popping open to show several shrunken muggle notebooks and diaries. Ignoring his bleeding hand in all of his haste to begin unshrinking the books, he grabbed for the two wands next to him to see if they would be compatible with him, before something made him instantly pause.

His hand which was still slightly bleeding had locked around the two wands in its grip, and a warmth of magic and immediate pain grew in his enclosed fist. The pain quickly brought him to his knees as a soft golden glow began to encompass and intensify around his enclosed hand and the wands within. Letting out a small strangled cry, he brought his hand protectively towards his chest as the pain and glow grew forcing tears to fall freely down from his pain-filled eyes landing ceremoniously onto his closed and glowing hand. A bright flash and a powerful wave of magic passed through Harry in an instant as he felt darkness encroaching on his vision before collapsing unconscious from the pain and magic.

Wearily blinking open his eyes, his whole body felt heavy, lethargic, and sore as he took in the ceiling of his tent's main room. Realizing he was still collapsed flat on the floor, he slowly tried to sit up and let his labored breathing slow down and relax. Upon trying this however, he quickly remembered what happened and realized he was still clutching something in his bleeding hand very tightly. Slowly trying to focus his vision and settle the magic running through him, Harry looked at his hand and no longer found the two wands of his parents, but a single wand of indescribable beauty and harmony. The mahogany and willow woods swirled and seemingly fought for domination along the eleven-inch shaft, and it now hummed with a feeling of rightness that matched even his original wand. He assumed

that the cores and woods merged with the help of his blood and tears, and had formed a unique harmony that he felt was just right.

Giving it a quick wave, he was overjoyed to see a shower of gold and silver sparks spray out the end, and loved the comfortable feeling the magic resonated in him. Not quite believing his luck, he quickly sought out a dragon hide wand holster from another trunk and fastened it to his left forearm giving him a now matching set. He stored the new wand for now, and used his original to heal and clean his hand before unshrinking all of the muggle notebooks and diaries. Just glancing through them quickly to see what they were, Harry soon placed them aside to look further at later. He placed the notebooks, diaries, box of rings, and photographs on the coffee table and floated the quilt to the tent's bedroom he rarely used before he levitated the now empty trunk out of the way to clear space for the next one.

Taking a quick break, he fell back onto the sofa before moving on to the next trunk, and heard an unusual crinkle from his jeans back pocket. He pulled out the thick letter he received from his parents at their Will Reading and almost paled that he had forgotten something so important. Carefully taking it out of the yellowish envelope and unfolding the long letter, he stared blankly at the beautiful feminine script that must have been his mother's for several moments as his vision clouded behind watery tears. It took him several minutes to compose himself enough to wipe at his face and slowly begin to read.

My Dearest Harry,

I so love you my son. I am so sorry, if you are reading this it means that neither your father nor I were able to raise you or be there for you, and for that I am truly sorry. We love you so much, and it hurts so much to write this now, but the times in which we live are not safe. Just know that your father and I love you more than anything and would do anything we could to help you or be there for you. Know that we are always with you and watching over you, and there is nothing you can do that would ever make us any less proud. We love you Harry.

You must know that if you are reading this, then we were betrayed by Peter Pettigrew, our secret keeper under the Fidelius Charm.

Hopefully Sirius explained everything to you about why we chose Peter, but it seems the best ploy we have at this point. We were forced into hiding because of a Prophecy spoken to Albus Dumbledore foretelling 'the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord.' If you have not yet been told of the Prophecy, you must speak with Albus about it immediately so that steps may be taken.

We always knew that you were special, and hopefully you won't let this Prophecy rule your life. Yes, prepare and take caution, but live your life to the fullest as you want not anyone else. We have all the faith in the world that you will make us proud in whatever you do, and that you will beat him. After you have heard the Prophecy, you need to demand to see the copy in the Department of Mysteries and destroy it ...it is too dangerous to have it there, especially with some of their questionable employees.

When you visit the family vaults, the only books you need to take are the Family Library Ledgers, they list every book in the collection and with a tap of your wand, becomes any book in the collection. I know the Potter one is very useful since I've been carrying it with me for the last two years, and will automatically return to the upper left most shelves of bookcases, and your Father said the same about the Gryffindor one, although we never took it ourselves, since your grandparents had it until their deaths three months ago. We have never had much opportunity to look at the Gryffindor stuff since I've only been twice, the first after marrying your fathers, and the second to recognize you as our Heir. I should warn you, that the sword reacted funny to you according to James, and he felt you should be warned before visiting as an adult.

Hopefully my notebooks and diaries survived, since I was told that the chest they are in cannot be destroyed or opened without my or your blood. Please use them well since they contain most of my life's work on charms, and never be afraid of who you are. I wish you all the absolute best my dear sweet son, and hope you have a lifetime of happy memories to share with your father and I ...but it better not be for a long time. There was no greater joy in my life as when I brought you into it, or gave mine up to give you yours. I love you my son and please take care until we can be reunited again.

Love,

Mum

Harry was overwhelmed by the time he finished reading the letter, and had to wipe his face on his still damp sleeve before he felt he could continue and read it several times over, savoring every word more than anything previously in his life. Refolding the letter after several long moments, Harry re-pocketed it and decided to continue on with his trunk hunt while he could. Pulling the two old personal trunks he collected from the Potter Vault in front of him, he undid their lids preparing to go through them more carefully. The heavier of the two trunks was filled to the brim with completed potions, potions ingredients, and supplies enough to stock a large Potions laboratory or Apothecary along with a large set of journals written by the trunks owner, Alexander Potter. The other seemed to be an old Hogwarts' School Trunk from several hundred years earlier, judging by the clothing, books, and supplies it contained, and wasn't as neat as it first appeared.

He went through Sirius' school trunk next, which was practically overflowing with clothes and robes, a few textbooks and loose parchment, a Nimbus 500, and a large photo album that covered all seven of his years at Hogwarts. The album was a veritable gold mine of old pictures containing the Marauders seven years of school, and even several of James and Lily while they were dating in seventh year based on the Head Boy and Girl badges they wore on their robes. The final picture stuffed in the back was of the four Marauders and Lily at their Graduation Ceremony, all smiling and innocent looking. After staring at the photos for a good while, he put the album with his parents' things, and school books with the other books, the robes and clothes he put on the sofa next to him, and the broom and other odd and ends in a pile to his left.

Moving on, he opened the Gryffindor Trunk, which was filled with several books he had collected from the vault, all of which he wanted to return once he got the Gryffindor Library Ledger, which according to his mum's letter would be a lot easier to use. The other Gryffindor trunk was filled with large uncut dragon hide pieces of various sizes and styles, a few large pieces of what appeared to be Acromantula

Silk, and even several large pieces of chain mail and old leather armor all in an exquisitely preserved state. At the very bottom of the trunk was an old, but very well made and preserved traveling cloak which he added to his pile of clothes, leaving the hides and armor together in the trunk for later. He then shrunk the Gryffindor trunk filled with books, and after a quick check of the Potter and Black trunks of books, he shrunk them as well and returned the three to his pocket to take back to their respective vaults and collect the Family Library Ledgers.

He decided to leave Sirius' Motorcycle Workshop Trunk alone for now and put it in the corner of the room out of the way. He then ended up spending some time going through all the clothes and robes, keeping a great many of Sirius' school things which were all well made and seemed to fit him better than some of his old ones. Adding all the old school books and a few others from those trunks to his own trunks' Library compartment, and storing Alexander Potter's Potions Trunk in the Potions Lab compartment, he was left with the personal items and odds and ends, most of which he put in the general compartment with his own broom and most of the birthday gifts he received last night, careful to remember the gifts he bought his friends that he had yet to give them and were still floating around in the general compartment.

He loaded all the new clothes and robes into the Closet compartment of his trunk, and anything he didn't want he put in an empty trunk, of which he now had several. He stored a few empty trunks shrunk and left in the tent for later, but left out two that he was going to give away if someone wanted it. Leaving all the unwanted things in one of these trunks, he levitated them to his door to tell the others about tomorrow before realizing it was quite late, and he should probably try to get some sleep. He still expected Tonks to visit and probably spend the night, but he had so much going on in his head that he felt it important to lay down and go through some Occlumency exercises before his head burst. He began the process of organizing his swirling and filled mind before she showed up, hoping tomorrow would be a little less intense and they would get a little more quality time together.

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AN: Brilliant! 500 Reviews ...Holy Shit, I need to work faster! And only five more chapters after this! I'm trying to get them out as fast as I can, so I can finally move onto another story without overly confusing myself. Thanks to all readers and reviewers, there are few things more rewarding than your praise and readership.

I don't think there are any more cliffies upcoming, so sit back, relax, and return your tray tables to their upright and locked position as we begin our decent into the last five chapters ...thank you for flying with Kassien Airlines ...sorry, couldn't pass it up

## Chapter 16

Wednesday 2nd of August, 1996

Harry woke just around dawn as usual in the customary tangle of limbs he had started to become very attached to. After spending a few peaceful minutes watching Tonks' shallow and deep breathing, he got a small smile at how cute she looked and how much he enjoyed sharing his bed with her. He was glad she had come to his room late last night, as he had become quite accustomed to sleeping with her in his arms and wasn't looking forward to when he went back to Hogwarts and had to leave her behind, but would cross that bridge when he came to it. For now, he would simply enjoy the time he could spend with her, and not worry too much about what he couldn't control.

He slowly and carefully extricated himself from bed and threw on his running shorts, tee, and trainers before leaving his bedroom to go for his morning run. Meeting Hermione, Ginny, Dean, and Neville all stretching in the entrance hall and waiting on him, Harry led the group outside. Well over an hour later, Harry was the last to return to Grimmauld Place and trudged up to his trunk alone to continue his morning Tai Chi and weight lifting exercises. He felt even better today, and had started to get used to the feeling of Gryffindor's magic humming through him as it brought him a calm that he greatly enjoyed. By the time he entered the bathroom after finishing his workout to shower and get ready, Tonks was standing in front of the full length mirror playing with her form having already showered and dressed.

"You look beautiful in every form Dora," he whispered into her ear as he came up behind her and wrapped his arms around her and slowly kissed as sensitive spot on her neck.

"Thanks Harry," she replied with a groan at his ministrations, "but you need to get in the shower ...you stink!"

"Thanks," mumbled Harry sarcastically and somewhat disappointed that they wouldn't be sharing another shower this morning as well, but quickly getting over it.



Arriving downstairs in the kitchen almost twenty minutes later dressed in his new black leather trousers and a tight black tee to go with Sirius' old black dragon hide boots. He also had his many trunks of books shrunken and ready to return to his family vaults and the one filled with dragon hide, leather, and Acromantula Silk in his pockets in case he was able to get back to Gringotts and Diagon Alley. He was glad to see everyone staying at Grimmauld Place still seated at the table eating breakfast or chatting happily as he entered the kitchen. Grabbing a seat between Tonks and Ginny at the younger end of the table, he quickly piled up his plate and tucked into a hearty breakfast, ignoring the disapproving glances of Molly, Augusta, and Emma directed towards his outfit. He did however notice the several appreciative glances of Tonks next to him, who seemed quite pleased that she finally got to see Harry in leather pants. All the men seemed caught between disgust and amusement at Harry's attire, but figured that if he liked it, then they would have to accept it after teasing him mercilessly about it of course.

"What's with the pants Harry?" blurted Seamus while trying to hold in his laughter as long as he could in front of so many adults.

"Nothing ...just trying them out," replied Harry with a quick glance across the room that paused momentarily on Tonks, "...and I quite like them."

"Really?" asked an excited Tonks at the same time as several others asked the same question in disbelief.

"Yeah," he answered honestly, "they're surprisingly comfortable."

"I'm glad you like them," responded Tonks with a happy smile that only Harry truly understood the meaning of.

"What are your plans today Harry?" asked Hermione as breakfast was slowly winding down, wondering what her friend was up to yesterday when he disappeared all morning with Tonks and Remus.

"I think Tonks and I where going to continue dueling for a bit," he answered with a glance to the young auror who happily nodded as

the faces of all the students fell dejectedly. "Why don't you all join us?"

"Can we really?" squealed Hermione, all disappointment gone from her face in an instant.

"You kids can't use magic ...you're all underage!" started Molly Weasley angrily and with a nervous glare at the students and a more angered one directed at Tonks for her involvement.

"That's okay Mrs. Weasley," replied Harry calmly as he smiled warmly at the mother hen quickly dispelling most of her vehemence. "They can just watch, and they really should check out the dueling chamber we found yesterday."

"I've seen it Molly, it's perfectly safe," spoke up Remus from his spot on the other side of Arthur, who merely nodded along with the werewolf.

"Oh ...alright," she huffed as Arthur patted her clenched hands on the table in a quiet show of support and caring.

Winky showed up shortly after, and began the cleaning of breakfast much to Molly disappointment as the younger group followed Harry and Tonks down into the cellar and the entrance to the dueling chamber. After opening the entrance for everyone through the back most wine rack, the group that hadn't been yesterday gasped in appreciation and amazement at what they found. The large chamber was almost the size of the Great Hall of Hogwarts, and most likely ran under the entire floor plan of the old Brownstone above it. The old and heavy stone walls and ceiling were very dirty still from age, neglect, and stray curses, but the enormity and beauty of the chamber was not lost on those just now seeing it.

"This place is wicked!" exclaimed Ron, who along with Dean, Seamus, Ginny, and Neville were looking around in wide-eyed awe at the massive room while Hermione seemed to be looking around with a much more critical eye, but still had to agree with her red-headed friend.

"Isn't it," answered Harry with a happy smile as everyone seemed to have finished their initial inspections of the area and returned to gather around him wondering what they had in store for today.

"So, can you tell us what you've really been doing this summer?" asked Hermione as she watched Harry look around fondly, with a brightness to his eyes and face that hadn't been there for a long while ...if ever.

Harry decided it couldn't hurt too much, and gave an abbreviated version of what his summer had actually been like. He started with the explanations of what he called the magical pulsating incidents, both the accidental one which led to his meeting with Madam Bones and started the visits from Tonks. He then went into the second occurrence when he intentionally or accidentally fixed his own core by purging Voldemort's magic from it, and strengthening it from within. He glossed over a lot of his training and reading, and most of what he did privately with Tonks, only pointing out the key things. Running and Tai Chi, Dueling and studying, Martial Arts and practice all made it into his daily routine which he talked about at some length.

Harry was reluctant, but decided to tell them about the magical blood adoption ritual and Will Reading at Gringotts from his perspective, as well as some of the key points from yesterday's trip to the bank with the Headmaster. He knew his money and inheritance would possibly be a sore subject with Ron, so kept the explanation brief not knowing if they would be comfortable enough about it, but did explain he had something for each of them. Harry quickly went upstairs to his trunk while Tonks took up the rest of the explanation, and began telling all about some of the spells and exercises they had been doing to practice. When Harry returned a few minutes later, he was carrying what Hermione instantly recognized as a Penseive.

"Where did you get a Penseive? They're supposed to be really rare and very expensive," she questioned before anyone else could figure out what it was.

"I actually have three now," smirked Harry to everyone's gob smacked faces, without answering her question as he set the decoratively engraved stone bowl on a table he conjured for them. "I

was just going to put in some of my memories of this summer's training and dueling for you to get an idea of what to expect in the DA next year, while Tonks and I practice for a bit."

Leaving his friends to their Penseive viewing, Harry joined Tonks on the dueling platform to get in some practice. It didn't take either of them long to realize that their dueling had definitely stepped up a notch with all the practice over the summer. Tonks had known at some level that she was getting sharper the more they practiced, but hadn't yet realized just how drastically that improvement had been until the other night at the Burrow. Two months ago, she would never have been able to hold her own against either of the Carrows twins who were almost as skilled as her crazy Aunt Bellatrix, but without the total lack of sanity that Azkaban robbed her of. She was amazed that she and Harry were pretty much able to duel the twins to a draw that night if you didn't count Harry's heroics of surviving another killing curse as too great a set back.

Having lost her duel against her Aunt Bellatrix earlier in June at the Department of Mysteries, she knew she wasn't skilled enough to defeat most of the Inner Circle Death Eaters, but could hold her own and defeat the lesser ones. Now she wondered just how good Harry could become, if in only this short time she had been forced to grow to keep up and train with him. Three years at the Auror Academy hadn't prepared her or pushed her as well as the month she had so far spent training with Harry. All the dueling practice they did, had helped with her endurance, speed, and skill and now felt much more confident that she could at least hold her own against almost any of Voldemort's best, or at the very least not be a total liability.

Harry too was feeling much better the moment the duel began, as he had a lot of energy to burn off. Telling his friends about his summer was something he knew would help them, but still was rather glad that was over and he could get back to work. He knew that he had been lucky at the Burrow at the end, but was willing to take it if it meant being alive. He didn't really even want to think about how he really survived, and wasn't willing to experiment much with the theory that only Voldemort's killing curses would actually kill him. Maybe he should just not get hit by one of those again?

After twenty minutes, Harry was still restless, having to hold back considerably so as not to hurt Tonks, although he was sure she would be finding out soon at this rate. Since grabbing Gryffindor's Sword and being declared an adult, he was simply buzzing with magic and energy, like a dam had been opened and flooded his body. He hoped the seemingly endless supply of magic and energy would help him in meeting Voldemort as an equal, since he knew he was still decades behind in knowledge and experience, and figured there had to be something to balance them out a little more. His biggest problem now was how to continue pushing himself when there were probably only a handful of people that could really challenge him one on one. He didn't want to get cocky as Snape usually accused him of, but with his newfound energy, he felt he could more than match any of the Inner Circle now, as long as he wasn't careless or get complacent.

His biggest problem was always going to be Voldemort. Sure, when a lot of Death Eaters gathered and odds were against you or in a larger scale battle, anything could happen, but Tom would always be the problem. Only probably Dumbledore and Moody could probably keep pushing him at this stage in individual duels, so he had to find ways to even the playing field so to speak. He noticed that he was just matching Tonks move for move, and figured that he might as well try stepping up the training now, and see if she could adapt and possibly learn to keep up. Without warning, he began releasing a barrage of spells, faster and more powerful than he probably ever had in the past and felt his magic practically sing in joyful release.

Tonks could tell the very moment Harry pushed it up to another level, as she had to abandon all thoughts of any form of attacking the young wizard, and focused every effort she could on defending herself from the oncoming onslaught. It only took her about a minute of full on dodging and shielding as if her very life depended on it to realize that she was fading fast and was going to lose another duel to her younger boyfriend, and didn't feel as bad about it as she thought she would. She had become an auror partly to become stronger than the men who liked to control and overpower their wives and other women, and being a metamorph, she had quite the number of unwanted sexual advances by those who only wanted the ultimate sex toy, something she thought of all men, until Harry.

Harry was hands down the best man she ever knew or dated, and easily the most powerful. But despite all that power, she had never once been afraid of him using it or hurting her, and would only use it to continue jumping in front of killing curses to protect her. She knew then how bad she had fallen for the man before her, and wondered just how horrible being separated from him during the school year would be. This however, was as far as her thoughts got as her strongest shields and barriers started collapsing under the strain from Harry's seemingly endless stream of spells, and a bright yellow hex and red stunner crashed into her sending her flying backwards as darkness claimed her vision.

Harry stopped firing the moment Tonks' shields collapsed, and quickly apparated to her side batting away the last two spells that had taken longer than him to travel the length of the platform. Dropping to his knees by her side and running a quick field medical scan, he realized that she had only been hit by an expeliarmus and then immediately followed by a stunner. Quickly enervating his older girlfriend and watching her eyes rapidly blink open, he let a sheepish smile grace his face as he offered his hand to help her to her feet and clear the remaining cobwebs before giving her a sound kiss in apology, glad all his friends were still currently viewing his memories inside the Pensieve.

"What the hell was that Harry?" asked a heavily breathing Tonks, both from the duel and the kiss.

"On my birthday, I visited my Family Vaults in the morning with Dumbledore, to receive my magical inheritance," he answered, finishing the end in a decent imitation of Dumbledore, which made Tonks snort in laughter and give him an odd look before smiling widely.

"So ...you're a legal adult?" purred Tonks quietly in his ear as she leaned in and started trailing small kisses on his ear and neck, "when were you going to tell me?"

"Sorry Dora ...I was so wiped out the other day it just slipped my mind," answered Harry with a peaceful look on his face as he enjoyed the attention his earlobe received.

"Slipped your mind, huh?" she whispered, "Maybe you'll have to be punished later."

"That sounds ....terrifyingly ...brilliant," breathed Harry between trailing his own kisses down Tonks' neckline and collarbone.

They spent only a few minutes snogging in peace, and then they went over and began practicing new or especially difficult spells they had recently seen or read about. Harry really enjoyed the time, since everybody else in the room was still inside the Pensieve, and he and Tonks could talk and touch openly just like it was back at Privet Drive for that wonderful month. It wasn't too much longer when the six students came out of Harry's Pensieve, to see both Harry and Tonks reading quietly in two of eight large overstuffed chairs spread in a circle around them.

"Okay class," mocked Harry in a fake teacher voice, "find a comfortable seat ...we can start with something that requires absolutely no magic ...meditation."

"Meditation?" asked a confused Dean, wondering what the muggle practice had to do with magic, "like 'ohm stuff?'"

"Not so much that part, but yes. That's how I found and accessed my magical core and finally understood Occlumency, which is where we are trying to get. So, let's get started..."

Lunch was a pretty loud affair that day, mostly due to Ron and Seamus' complaints about how boring and useless meditation was, neither giving it much of a chance from the get go. Everyone else however really enjoyed it, especially Neville, who was the only one to have felt his magic during the exercises Harry had them doing. Hermione and Ginny both just enjoyed the peace and quiet, and used the time to clear their thoughts and focus on their breathing which was quiet refreshing after all the exercise they had started over the last week. Remus, who we learned would be staying at headquarters

for a while, spent some of lunch explaining his own experiences with meditation and was able to stop most of Ron and Seamus' grumblings with his stories of its benefits, something Harry and Tonks couldn't seem to get across. Everyone sat around the kitchen table long after lunch just chatting and catching up with everyone until Harry announced that he had to get going to his afternoon lesson early.

Harry and Tonks disappeared from Grimmauld Place almost two hours earlier than usual, since they had to make a stop at Gringotts before the martial arts' class. They appeared in the alleyway next to the Leaky Cauldron with inaudible pops, and after both altering their appearances a little, they headed towards the gateway pub. With practiced ease, the plain looking older pair passed through the slightly crowded pub and quickly made their way to the goblin bank.

"Next," drawled a bored and ragged old goblin teller.

"I'd like to visit my vaults," spoke Harry calmly to the narrow eyed goblin who studied the pair critically.

"Key?" he drawled somewhat snootily.

"Here they are," responded Harry as he handed over his new key ring, complete with ceremonial keys to the Black, Potter, and Gryffindor Family Vaults to the now comically wide eyed and stuttering goblin.

"O-of c-c-course L-Lord P-Potter B-Black," he struggled with difficulty after seeing the ceremonial keys, and knowing only one customer with control over multiple ancient family vaults. "L-Lord Ragnok had asked to speak with you on your next visit. Do you have time to do that first?"

"Sure, I have some time," responded Harry curiously, wondering what else they needed from him, and hoping he had enough time to return his books and find the Family Library Ledgers.

"Right this way sir," started the goblin, hopping off his stool and ignoring the protests of those in line behind Harry, lead the couple to the doors leading towards Ragnok's office.



"Ah Harry, it's good to see you again," started Ragnok the moment his office door was opened and Harry and Tonks entered, "and you Miss Tonks."

"Hello Ragnok ...it's good to see you too," answered Harry while taking Tonks hand and leading her to the two chairs across from the old goblin, "how can I help you today?"

"In our haste to accomplish everything the other day, I forgot to ask if you'd be willing to consolidate your trust fund vault and Mr. Black's personal vault now that you have access to all of your money," queried Ragnok, who then continued without much of a pause. "We have also received documentation of your thirty-three percent ownership in Weasley's Wizarding Wheezes, and wondered which Family you wished to put those shares under?"

"Oh..." breathed out Harry as his brain quickly tried to absorb and process the information in order to make the best decision. "I would like to have one normal vault, so how about consolidating my trust fund vault and Sirius' into either one, and put the Weasley's shares with the Potter Family Investments."

"Excellent Harry," replied Ragnok easily as he started making notes on the many pieces of parchment spread out before him. "On another matter, we have never had so many Family Vaults under one person, and are unsure how you want the Family Accounts managed now that you are of age?"

"Who is managing them now?" asked Harry inquisitively, as he watched Ragnok give Tonks a significant look that Harry easily understood. "You can speak freely in front of Tonks sir."

"Thank you Harry ...the Gryffindor Vault has always been managed by the director of Gringotts ...so, I am that Family's manager, and have been for almost two hundred years. The Potter and Black Family's account managers have both passed on in the last ten years, and can only be reappointed by the Head of the Family, otherwise the account managing reverts to Gringotts' director ...again myself," finished Ragnok with a satisfied smirk at Harry's confused face,

“...and as busy as I am, I don’t feel comfortable managing three of the largest accounts we have. I will of course continue managing the Gryffindor Vault as is my duty, but would appreciate if you could think of appointing someone else to manage the other two.”

“Would Griphook be capable of managing both?” asked Harry honestly after several moments of thought.

“Griphook? Interesting choice, but could probably only manage one if you wanted his full attention. I will call and ask him,” responded Ragnok gladly. “What about your friend Mr. Lupin?”

“Remus?” asked Harry, “he could do it?”

“Yes, if you wanted him. I think he would be quite capable from what I’ve seen and heard,” responded the old goblin with what could only be a goblin smirk.

“Sure, does it matter which Family?” continued Harry.

“I would recommend giving Griphook the Black Family, he has a better chance to get around the probably very heavily cursed items that they are known to possess. Plus, I believe many Potter investments will be more acceptable to Mr. Lupin’s liking,” added Ragnok seriously.

“You wanted to see me Lord Ragnok?” spoke the much smaller Griphook as he entered the office a moment later.

“Ah ...yes Griphook,” started Ragnok with a wicked grin on his aged face that had the younger goblin literally shaking in his skin. “Lord Potter-Black has requested you to manage the Black Family Accounts if you feel you are capable.”

“O-Of course,” replied an almost frozen to the spot goblin until he realized just what happened and turned to look at Harry. “It would be an honor Lord Potter-Black.”

“Thank you Griphook, and please just call me Harry,” he replied gratefully.

“Wonderful,” interjected Ragnok as he made several more notations on various parchments before sliding a stack over for Harry to sign and seal with his Family Rings. “I will give you a letter for Mr. Lupin that will detail his task better and also allow him access to the Potter Family Accounts here in Gringotts. I can also provide him a small office with the other Account Managers if he would so desire, primarily for security purposes and access to information.”

“Brilliant,” exclaimed Harry, who got a snort of amusement from Tonks who had hardly moved since she heard the words Gryffindor Family Vault back at the very beginning of the conversation, still trying to figure that one out, and was just piecing together the idea Harry was going to be asking Remus about, and thought it sounded like a good prank.

“You did receive a Gringotts wallet, keyed to you in the packet of information I gave you on your birthday?” asked Ragnok, and getting a nod from Harry continued. “It has a passport; driver’s license, a Gringotts muggle credit card, and can pull out any amount of cash in any currency within the muggle and magical world.”

“Brilliant,” repeated Harry, only to get another snort of amusement from Tonks at his understatement. “Can I visit the Family Vaults again real quick?”

“Of course, Griphook will take us there now,” responded Ragnok who stood and shook hands with Harry and then Tonks before following Griphook out of the office and towards the carts, with a bemused couple in their wake.

“Were you going to tell me you’re related to Gryffindor?” asked Tonks once they climbed into the rear seat of the cart and began speeding downwards towards the family vaults.

“Would you believe that I forgot?” replied a sheepish Harry.

“Not bloody likely,” she snorted in response, and gave him a good swat to the shoulder.

“Okay, fine. I didn’t want you to get all weird and think it made me anything else than who I was, since I only found out two days ago ...although I guess I may have expected it on some level,” rambled Harry, knowing he owed her the truth, and wanting her to understand him better.

“Because of Gryffindor’s Sword?” she asked and answered simultaneously, seeing his nod of agreement.

“The Sword showed up again on my birthday when I was in the vault, and kind of gave me a rush of magic,” continued Harry, happy to have Tonks to share this stuff with. “It’s one of the things I want to check while we’re here.”

Over twenty minutes later, Harry had already returned the books and found the Library Ledgers for the Black and Potter Families, as well as a collection of old ancestor’s wands he was bringing back for his friends to use over the summer. He was now entering the Gryffindor Family Vault, and had quickly returned the books and found the Library Ledger near the Sword and Genealogy Grimoire, which he again felt a pull towards, but this time it was mixed with something else entirely.

Tonks had marveled at the size and wealth of the Black Family Vault, and couldn’t even begin to imagine what the Potter and Gryffindor ones were like. She had waited in the cart during Harry’s trip into the Potter Vault staring at the large dragon guarding the Family Vault Chamber, and wondered if anyone was stupid enough to try and get into a vault they weren’t allowed in. After Harry left the cart to enter the Gryffindor vault, Tonks immediately felt like something was different. She felt a small hum within her pulling her to get out of the cart and follow Harry.

“Go to him, my child. The magic calls you,” spoke Ragnok softly, but with a voice so filled with wisdom that it spoke of only clarity and truth.

Harry stepped up on the platform with the Sword and Grimoire, and instantly recognized the other feeling and turned his head to the vault’s entrance. Tonks approached Harry in a daze, just letting her magic guide her up to him and grab his left hand as his right reached

out before him. In a flash, the Sword of Gryffindor was in Harry's outstretched hand and again touching the ancient Grimoire as magic flared through them both accompanied by a glow of white light. Again, the magic left as soon as it came, and both Harry and Tonks were on their knees hands still held tightly breathing deep gasps of air.

"Wow ...is that what happened on your birthday?" asked a breathless Tonks.

"Yeah, pretty much," spoke Harry as he stood and returned the Sword to its sheath and studied the open book on the podium.

"Does that mean?" whispered Harry as he looked at the pages in front of him and back to the woman next to him with wide unbelieving eyes.

"What does it say?" asked Tonks as she leaned over to look at what had Harry so worked up.

Harry James Potter-Black

--born 31st of July 1980 to James Benjamin Potter and Lily Ann Evans Potter.

--adult 31st of July 1996, Head of Family Potter-Black

--married 2nd of August 1996 to Nymphadora Isabelle Tonks Potter-Black.

"Oh!" breathed Tonks quietly bringing her hands to her mouth and unconsciously dropping Harry's hand.

"I'm sorry Dora, I ...I didn't know that would happen," began Harry with a voice and face mixed with hurt and fear, as he could barely lift his head enough to look at her face.

"Oh Harry," whispered Tonks intimately as she reached out and lifted his chin to meet her natural body and eyes, refusing to let him go on like this, "I love you, you sweet man ...and I'm glad we're married, you are the only man for me."

"I love you too Dora and I couldn't be happier either," he answered before giving her a small kiss, and feeling overwhelmed with joy, after only a few words that he wanted to here so bad, that it made him giddy just thinking about what just happened.

"Although, I'm not sure how everyone else will take the news," added Harry moments later.

"I think we should still wait to tell people, I just don't think they are ready for something like this," she answered honestly, "and besides, I'd like to tell my mother, and she'll probably still want to plan a w-w ...wedding," she finished with a cringe of dread.

"A wedding?" asked an equally apprehensive and skeptical Harry.

"I know," remarked Tonks with a similar sense of dread, "but it would need to be done to be recognized by the Ministry and our friends and families."

"When?" asked Harry, as the couple abandoned the platform and began to head back to the waiting goblins and cart.

"Let's think about it for a while before we say anything," answered Tonks, before Harry stopped walking and looked back to the podium where they left the book open, and saw a flash of color and light and went back for it.

"Um," spoke Harry after grabbing what he found and turning to face an inquisitive Tonks. "I think this is yours Mrs. Potter," he added as he held up a beautiful gold ring with a large red stone to a now wide eyed witch.

"Is that Lady Gryffindor's Ring?" she asked in a small timid voice mixed with a little awe.

"And now it's yours Dora," answered Harry with a sappy smile on his face and amused twinkling emerald eyes, as he asked for her hand and gently placed the ring on her finger her expression still torn between awe and disbelief. Once the ring was on however, she only

felt happiness and love towards her mate in front of her and knew that he had accepted her as his equal.

"It's beautiful Harry, thank you," she responded with a chaste kiss that tasted sweeter and was more powerful than any of their previous ones.

"Come on, we have to get moving if we are going to make one more stop before class," spoke Harry after several moments spent holding one another and sharing the connection being born between them.

"What other stop?" asked Tonks as they returned to the cart to see the two goblins pleasantly chatting and sending many smiles and glances in the couples direction.

"Allow me to be the first to say congratulations Lord and Lady Gryffindor," spoke Ragnok with an accompanied ceremonial bow of respect, duplicated by his subordinate Griphook.

"Thank you Lord Ragnok, Griphook," responded both Harry and Tonks in unison, as they returned the bows and then climbed into the carts to return to the alley.

"If the Lady would like, we can retrieve the Potter and Black rings for her now as well?" continued Ragnok who nodded to Griphook, and waited only a minute for him to return to the cart with both requested rings, which he then handed to Harry as they sped off back to the bank's lobby.

"My Gryffindor and Potter rings merged together when I put them on, and I bet the Black one would too" Harry started explaining once they were headed back towards the lobby, "You can make them invisible too ...would you wear the other ones too?"

"Of course you prat," she answered with another shoulder smack, before holding out her hand for Harry to place the other rings on her finger as they sped around the tracks at break neck speed.

Getting out of the carts as a married couple three time over, was a little overwhelming for them both at first, but they managed polite

goodbye's to Ragnok and Griphook before getting into disguise and leaving Gringotts much more confused than when they entered almost two hours ago. They just had enough time to run into Armand's Armory & Apparel and get measured for new pants, vests, and cloaks before Harry enlarged the trunk filled with Dragon hide and Acromantula Silk and told the owner he could keep any of the left over scraps as partial payment, and charge them whatever he felt fair when they came to pick them up in two days time. With no time to spare, the couple practically raced through the Leaky Cauldron, and apparated to their customary alley before running the rest of the way to the dojo to make it to Harry's lesson.

The martial arts lesson went by quickly, with everyone continuing to pair up and spar one another as their sensei walked around the dojo correcting techniques and giving instructions and hints to his advanced students, occasionally stopping to go over something specific. Harry waited until after the lesson let out, and most classmates left for home quite sore and tired before approaching Sensei Leung to ask what else he would teach him. Sensei Leung was very surprised with the young teenager's amazingly quick progress in his current lessons, and agreed to teach Harry weapons forms for an hour after lesson if he felt he could manage. Harry was only too happy to agree, hoping it could be another way to improve his body and dueling, and thanked the older man profusely before meeting up with Tonks for the walk back.

When the pair arrived in the alley, they stopped and shared several kisses in private as husband and wife, before they thought of returning to Grimmauld Place. With so many people living there, the young couple rarely had any moments of privacy, and took full advantage of their small time together. Apparating back to headquarters a few minutes after dinner started, Harry and Tonks joined an already full kitchen table and enjoyed another wonderful meal.

Several Order members were joining the group for dinner before the weekly meeting scheduled every Wednesday night. Professors Dumbledore, McGonagall, Flitwick, and Hagrid along with Hestia Jones and Kingsley Shacklebolt joined everyone else currently staying at headquarters and made for a loud and excited dinner. Harry was



able to talk to Kingsley about his progress in the Martial Arts class, and that Sensei Leung had agreed to also start teaching him weapon forms which made the older auror smile proudly.

“Okay kids, it’s time to head out to the den so we can have our Order meeting,” announced Molly Weasley as the time approached eight o’clock and other started trickling in for the meeting, ignoring the grumbling of many of the younger generation for not being included.

“Have a pleasant evening everyone,” spoke Harry calmly as he stood from his chair gracefully and gave a sweeping nod to the room at large before exiting without so much as a fuss or backward glance.

The Order and DA members looked at one another in surprise at Harry’s attitude of acceptance and lack of reaction to wanting to be included. The other kids shortly followed him, knowing that without Harry, they had even less of a chance of sitting in on the meetings and said their goodbyes to the group. The adults looked around at one another in wonder that the kids would accept being excluded so easily, and especially Harry who it seemed was always trying to get more information about the war and Voldemort, but decided to not worry on it. Only Tonks knew why Harry could leave so easily, because she had always filled him in on anything of importance that happened in the meetings anyways.

Harry had quickly left the kitchen, not really wanting to listen to the endless meeting or paying much attention to where he was headed. An opening and closing of the front door alerted him to where he had wandered, and as he looked up at the newcomer, he stopped dead in his tracks. There, looking as sour faced and greasy as usual was one Severus Snape, Potions Master, Order spy, Head of Slytherin, and all around asshole.

“Get out of my way Potter,” snapped the cold and irritated voice of his least favorite teacher as he tried to brush by the teenager imposingly.

“Yeah, I wouldn’t want to get any of that grease on my new clothes ...huh Snape,” shot back Harry quickly and with a rather good interpretation of the Slytherin smirk.

"You insolent brat," fumed Severus as he quickly whipped out his wand to teach the little whelp a lesson only to find himself staring down the wand of a very powerful and pissed off looking green eyed wizard.

"Tsk, tsk Snape ...you need to control that temper of yours," mocked Harry in a voice he knew would aggravate the already livid Potions Master, "it could get you into trouble."

"Piss Off Potter," spat Snape in both anger and a small amount of nervous fear as he starred into the fury that was Potter's eyes before quickly turning away fuming and headed towards the house's kitchen without another backward glance.

"Let's begin this meeting of the Order of the Phoenix," started Albus Dumbledore importantly once everyone was gathered around the large wood kitchen table, causing all of the small conversations to cease immediately as all heads turned towards their leader. "First, we should go over the attacks Sunday night..."

It was a long two hours where everyone questioned the Death Eater attacks at the stroke of midnight on Harry's birthday. Bill tried to better understand how Harry managed to break through the anti-apparation wards, while his parents were more interested in how he survived the twin killing curses. Dumbledore tried to explain to the best of his abilities, stating Harry's growing magic and lack of preconceived limits that allows him to do the unthinkable, and also mentioned his use of his magical core to block the unforgivable curses. Most people seemed to except that explanation, knowing how different and powerful the young Boy-Who-Lived had become with regards to magic.

Severus Snape had a very difficult time struggling with this new understanding of Potter along with his own perceptions of the little brat he never felt smart enough or strong enough to do the unthinkable. He was really going to have to re-evaluate his understanding and what to make of the spoiled and arrogant green eyed wizard. Not only had he survived, but did so against the Unspeakable Carrows' twins, probably the strongest of the Dark Lords' fighters behind only Bellatrix, Lucius, Rudolphus, and Xavier

Yaxley. Perhaps Harry isn't the lazy weakling he believed, but was still not prepared to take the word of those who worshiped the boy until he could prove it himself.

Kingsley went on to explain the final numbers of the night, including the two Death Eaters that died from sustained injuries and the twenty-three that were injured and captured. Two Inner Circle members in John Gibbons and Gregory Goyle Sr. were the prize of the catch, and all 23 had already been set trial dates for later in the month. He mentioned the quick turnaround because of Amelia Bones' insistence on taking a hard line against the Death Eater threat, and seconded the Order's need to recruit her soon.

"Very good," concluded Dumbledore once it seemed that they had exhausted all topics about the battle, still needing to bring up one topic of great importance to the Order. "Now ...we do have a small problem. I cannot find anyone to fill the post of Defense Against the Dark Arts, and I fear that the Ministry might again try to get involved. I know I have asked many of you before, but I was hoping one of you would consider fulfilling that post as we are in dire need."

The silence in the room following the headmaster's request was completely expected, having already asked this group twice now for volunteers. Most kept their heads down and mouths shut, trying not to be noticed and asked directly about teaching the cursed position. The low grumbling of Severus Snape, who had always desired the position and was always refused, was the only real noise in the room until the most unlikely of candidates stepped forward.

"I think that I might like to give it a try ...if that's alright with you sir?" spoke Tonks thoughtfully, thinking this could be the way to stay close to Harry over the school year that she needed, and knowing that with being married now there was no separating them or her going back to work for the Ministry.

"I think that is a wonderful idea Nym ...Ms. Tonks," responded Albus happily that someone qualified would want the job, and already knowing from Harry that she was a good instructor. "Are you sure it will be alright with the aurors?"

“I’m currently on suspension and taking an extended leave of absence and would love to quit, no offence Mad Eye, Shack,” she replied unconcerned of what others might think. “I’ve enjoyed teaching Harry this summer, and think it’s important to help prepare these kids.”

“Well spoken Professor Tonks,” replied Albus with a grateful smile that one less obstacle was taken care of, “we’ll talk after the meeting about specifics.”

Tonks could barely pay attention the rest of the Order meeting since her head was spinning so fast, and couldn’t believe what she just did. She was a little worried about what Harry would think, but rationalized that with being close to him over the school year and disregarded any other counterargument she could make. She didn’t want to return to the aurors where she was underappreciated and poorly used by a corrupt system and government and with marrying Harry, money or fighting dark wizards would never be in short supply.

Harry meanwhile, after his slight altercation with Snape, went and grabbed his mother’s notebooks and journals and took them to the den to read while his friend started up a rousing game of gobstones and then exploding snap. Ignoring everything around him, Harry began with the notebooks to which he had added Lily’s charm journal from Professor Flitwick, and quickly became engrossed in his mother’s writings and experiments. He located a permanent book replication charm, and all the notes and work that went into its creation, and quickly learned what he knew would be a very useful spell.

After having gone through the many small notebooks and loose parchments with spells, notes, and experiments over the next three hours, Harry bound them all together into a large leather tome and one leather journal of her personal writings he hadn’t yet gone through. Setting them both aside, Harry dug out his Potter Family Library Ledger and slowly started reading the introductions, and mainly the instructions for viewing and adding books to the various collections. Figuring that he might as well give it a try with copies of the two bound books of his mother, he sat the Potter Ledger on top of the first book and pulled out his new wand liking its feel.

"Liber adaugeo," (=add book) whispered Harry as he gave the Ledger a small tap of his wand causing both books to glow blue for a long moment before the bottom book disappeared into the Ledger storing it into the Family vault.

"Harry ...what was that?" asked a very curious and wide eyed Hermione who always seemed to be paying attention when spells or books were involved.

"Just putting a book in my Family vault," he answered honestly, now dreading at some level doing this downstairs where everyone could watch and critique what you were doing.

"What book? How did you send it back?" she asked predictably, eliciting groans from the other students who were quite used to her book and knowledge fetishes

"This book," started Harry as he picked it up to show her, "is the Potter Library Ledger."

"A Family Library Ledger? Those are supposed to be really rare ...I've read about them," responded an excited Hermione to the groans and giggles of those trying to play exploding snap unsuccessfully, "Can I look at yours?"

"Unfortunately you can't, only Potters can open and read it. Its part of the enchantments and protections on it," Harry responded sympathetically.

"That's how the Longbottom Ledger is," added Neville just before the card in his hand exploded in his face causing everyone to laugh heartily.

"Oh ...okay," spoke a disheartened Hermione.

"That doesn't mean I can't look something up for you ...or make you a copy of any book I have," offered Harry knowing by the excitement that suddenly filled his bushy haired friend's face that she was very pleased.

“Really, I didn’t think you could magic permanent copies ...or you can’t according to Madam Pince?” asked Hermione always eager to learn something.

“My mom developed a permanent copying charm, it works great,” I answered easily, “so what do you want me to look up?”

“Do you have any books on the fidelius charm?” she asked while staring at the Ledger with envy.

It turned out that Harry had three books on it in the Potter Ledger, the only one he showed anybody, and each was quite old. Ancient Charms of the Master by Arvent Artellus, Charmous Obscurous in Italian, and a book simply called Fidelia which I made sure to remember to read later. Hermione of course wanted the first one, and after calling the book to the Ledger, Harry made a perfect copy of it and gave her before returning the Ledger to its rightful state.

“You are going to teach me that copy spell right?” asked Hermione enviously.

“If you’re nice to me,” Harry answered back with a lopsided grin before returning to his project of putting his now bound mother’s journals into the Potter Ledger.

“It looks like the Order meeting let out,” spoke Ginny a good bit later as they heard movement in the halls and the opening and closing of the front door and swoosh of floo travel.

“It’s getting late kids,” spoke Molly in full mother mode, “why don’t you all head up to bed?”

“Okay,” chorused several teenagers reluctantly.

“Harry, could we have a quick word in private?” asked Remus thoughtfully as he joined the teenager on the walk up the stairs and towards his bedroom on the same floor.

"What's up Remus?" Harry asked the moment they were behind the closed door and had a silencing spell put up.

"How long have you and Tonks been sleeping together?" he asked bluntly causing Harry to choke slightly in surprise and a healthy bit of fear.

"Um ...what?" Harry asked playing dumb hopefully.

"I have an incredible sense of smell Harry ...I've smelled you on each other, and not normal smells either," Remus responded with a hard look to the younger wizard he always tried to look out for.

"So," Harry replied challengingly, "what if we are? I'm a legal adult and can be with whoever I want!"

"Don't get your knickers in a knot Harry," he chided easily and with a small laugh. "I just wanted to tell you I knew, so you could talk to me if you ever needed help or advice. I promise you never to say anything about it, if that's what you want."

"Thanks Remus, we just don't know what to do at the moment about telling people," Harry responded gratefully, and easily unloaded his frustrations. "Plus with me going back to school next month and Voldemort ...it's just tough."

"I feel your pain cub," responded the older wizard knowingly, "but I think you might be in for quite the surprise when you are joined in bed tonight."

"Why, what do you know?" asked Harry.

"Sorry Harry, not my news to tell," he answered with a smirk that made me remember that he was once a Marauder and not the person to mess with or antagonize into giving out information on Tonks. "I'm sure you'll find out soon enough."

"Thanks Remus," Harry responded in a mixture of gratitude and sarcasm for everything the older wizard did for him. "See you at breakfast."

“Goodnight Harry,” Remus replied watching the young wizard leave and go down the hall to the Master Bedroom deep in thought.

Harry put away his things quickly, and dressed for bed waiting for Tonks to get out of the meeting after the Order meeting and wondering what it was about. He didn't have to wait too long, as she came into his bedroom shortly after he got in bed with a large happy smile plastered on her face lighting it up completely. Harry immediately knew that whatever the news, it was good, and Remus would need to be taught a lesson about teasing later.

“What has you so happy?” he asked minutes later when they both came up for air from the intense lip lock.

“You're kissing your new Defense against the Dark Arts teacher ...that's what,” she responded as her smile grew if possible even wider at Harry's shocked face.

“Really, that's brilliant!” responded an elated Harry who quickly recaptured Tonks' lips in a deep snog trying to convey his happiness through their tongues.

Both the very strong silencing charm and locking charm came in extremely handy that night as the young couple celebrated their surprising marriage earlier in the day the best way they knew how. The silencing charm which worked overtime until the wee hours of the morning, and the locking charm that prevented Hermione and Ginny from entering the master bedroom after he overslept for the morning run and they had come to wake him. A quick naked scramble out of bed as their knocking persisted; he jumped into some underwear, shorts, socks, and shoes before grabbing his wand and cleaning his clothes magically. He stepped into his trainers and grabbed the first t-shirt he found before slipping it on as he opened the door.

Ginny and Hermione were just about to give up, having been knocking on Harry's door for almost five minutes after they realized that they couldn't open it without magic. Stepping out of the bedroom with his arms and head stuck trying to pull on his t-shirt; the girls got a very good look at the new and improved Harry Potter. He was still



thin, and probably always would be better built for endurance, but was still very sexy and had defined muscles filling his stomach, chest, and arms making both girls stand mute and staring at their friend's body before his head and arms finally popped out of their proper holes snapping them out of their stupor.

"Is everything alright?" he asked curiously, wondering what the sudden silence was from after having been knocking rather loudly for the last few minutes, and now neither of them looking him in the face.

"Yeah ...you didn't meet us for the morning run," started an unusually timid Hermione still not lifting her head.

"So we came to get you," whispered Ginny quietly, but with enough color showing on her face despite looking at her shoes for Harry to realize what just happened, and made him smile proudly.

"If you liked it, I can always run shirtless," Harry teased them back shocking them both at his forwardness and flirting, was this even the same Harry Potter.

"No ...that's okay," answered a flush faced Ginny in a squeak before fleeing down the hallway and towards everyone else waiting to go running.

"Um ...okay, let's go," replied Harry with an amused snort at the younger girls' actions.

Harry felt a little sluggish throughout the run, probably from the late start and lack of warm up and took a little longer than usual to finish what was easily his favorite trail through the park. He and Tonks enjoyed an absolutely wonderful shower together their first morning as husband and wife, and decided to keep the news to themselves for as long as possible. They got down to breakfast at separate times, and Harry had to ignore Remus' knowing smirk as he ate breakfast and listened to the younger crowd talk about meditation. They were more eager today to learn now that Remus had assured Ron and Seamus the benefits of it and the whole group seemed more excited as they made their way to the training chamber while Harry ran to his room for his little surprises.

When he got downstairs to the training chamber, Harry called his friends over to a small table set up against one of the walls. He then dumped almost two dozen old wands that belonged to ancestors of the Black and Potter families onto the table in front of the six wide eyed teenagers. He told them to each pick one out to use as a spare wand, and had Ginny pick out two since she found a pair that worked better than her own ancestor's wand she had been using for the last four years. Harry then let them play with the untraceable wands for a good ten minutes letting them do all the magic they wanted over the break before asking them to gather in the circle of seats.

"We will only work on meditation for a short while today to ensure you all are on the right track," started Harry, easily falling back into teacher mode. "After today, it will be up to you to continue with it in your spare time since we will be primarily dueling and learning curses while we are here. Make no mistake, without meditation and proper control over your mind, tempers, and emotions I will not teach you much, for you will struggle greatly with what we work on. So, it is up to each of you to practice the skill so that you can move on to opening your magical channels and protecting your mind with Occlumency which I will help you all with when you prove you're capable."

"How will we know when we're capable?" asked Hermione eagerly.

"I'll test you of course," answered Harry with a lopsided grin, "after you feel you've meditated enough for today, come meet Tonks and I over there where we will be working on aiming drills ...and no Ron, you have not yet meditated enough."

"Fine," the red head grumbled good naturedly as the others chuckled slightly at his misfortune, all thinking he would probably try that exact thing to get out of meditating.

Harry quickly explained his plan to Tonks, and the pair quietly got to work transfiguring a small area to be used later as a classroom of sorts before preparing the balloons they were using to practice everyone's aim when they were ready. Within twenty minutes, only Neville and Ginny still remained meditating as the others joined Harry

and Tonks taking turns firing at the moving balloons to improve their aim. It was an additional twenty minutes until the last two participated in the 'balloon shoot' as Hermione called it, both talking a liking to the meditation techniques they had already learned a good deal about.

"I think that tomorrow, we will break up the day a little different," started Harry as lunchtime seemed to be approaching quickly and he had yet to get in any dueling practice of his own.

"Why?" asked the always curious Hermione.

"Because I need my practice too," replied Harry, "and mornings are my favorite time to duel."

"So what are we going to do?" asked Neville.

"I was planning on splitting you all into pairs during the morning depending on what you want to work on, and then having DA classes so to speak after lunch that way when I leave for my martial arts lessons, you all can continue to work on what we just went over and finish with any things I leave for you," responded Harry thoughtfully as he mulled over the timing in his head and felt pretty good about the arrangement, getting nods from everyone else.

"Who are the pairs?" wondered Seamus as he shared a look with Dean hoping to be able to pick his best friend.

"That will probably fluctuate at the beginning until we find ones that really work," Harry answered knowingly. "For now, we'll just match partners up when they are both at the same stage in training, any questions?"

"What's with the classroom area you put together?" asked Hermione with a look over to the corner tables and blackboard.

"Funny you should ask," smirked Harry, "but I have left you each a small pile of books for you to read at your earliest convenience."

"Books?" asked Hermione excitedly as everyone else said the same thing only in a much different tone of voice.

"I have made copies for all of you," answered Harry with a lopsided smile. "The book entitled Meditation should be read as soon as possible, and after that you each have the three volume Defense set Professor Lupin and my godfather gave me called Practical Defense Magic and It's Uses Against the Dark Arts. These will be your DA textbooks throughout the year, study and learn them; they will save your life."

"What's this last thing on our book pile?" asked a curious Ginny as she saw an usual looking small book on the top of each pile in the classroom area.

"This is a charmed muggle spiral notebook," answered Harry with a wide smile at Dean and Hermione, the only muggle raised wizards or witches in the group. "They are charmed to never run out of paper, and will be your personal notebooks for the DA. Feel free to fill them with notes, spells, questions, it doesn't matter they are yours to use however. As you can see, mine is already growing quite substantial although it still looks as new and as big as the day I got it," he finished while quickly flipping through the pages of his showing well over several hundred pages of notes in a short few seconds showing how much he actually used it.

"These are brilliant Harry," exclaimed Hermione practically bouncing up and down in excitement.

"Good, now let's go eat before Ron starts complaining," joked Harry as he lead everyone from the training room laughing happily at a muttering Ron defending his appetite on being a growing boy.

AN: Sorry for the wait, mea maxima culpa! No good excuse other than lack of motivation to actually sit down and type these chapters out. On a good note, motivation to write other stories has not been a problem, only the typing is tedious but essential for the story's editing and development. Only four more chapters left! Thanks again to all reviewers for sticking with me, enjoy!

## Chapter 17

It was an exhausted and hungry group of teenagers and Tonks that slowly made their way upstairs for lunch on the first Thursday of August after their first day of real training. Everyone but Hermione was loudly complaining about having to read and have homework for the DA, but Harry simply said that if they wanted his instruction they had to follow his rules. It quickly shut everyone up, and they were soon entering a very full kitchen with several Order members talking in small groups as they poured over several copies of the Daily Prophet causing an uneasy hush to befall them as they realized something must be up.

“What’s going on?” asked Ron loudly and tactlessly as they approached his parents and oldest brother who should be at work.

“Today’s Prophet came a little late,” started Bill with a wide smile after looking up and seeing the newcomers, “and it’s pretty interesting ...here, have a look.”

### OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY UNDER HEAVY SCRUTINY

By Sheila Starkwater

Early this morning in a surprise move, Madam Amelia Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, filed criminal charges against the current Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge and his Undersecretary, Delores Umbridge. The charges filed at this morning’s planned press junket caused chaos for the attending Minister and his Undersecretary, who were both swarmed with questions from the attending press and public. The current administration is being charged with several counts of interference in the DMLE and Hogwarts, as well as other unnamed charges, including various cover-ups. For a complete list of charges see page 3, for reactions see page 7.

“Wow, that’s unexpected,” spoke Harry after he finished reading the small front page article and handed it off to the others who had been trying to read over his shoulders.

“Yeah,” responded Bill eagerly, “the goblins actually asked me to come find you and request that you visit Lord Ragnok soon. He said it would be worth your while.”

“Okay,” answered Harry with a look to Tonks to see if she would come with him and getting a nod. “I’ll go before my martial arts class.”

“Brilliant,” answered the older curse breaker, “well then I better get back to work, it’s already been a real crazy morning with this article coming out. I’ll see everyone for dinner tonight.”

“Oh ...that’s wonderful Bill,” fused Molly happily.

“Thanks Bill,” responded Harry as he shook the older wizard’s hand as he prepared to leave, “see you then.”

“I can’t believe Madam Bones is going after Fudge and Umbridge ...that’s a risky move on her part,” spoke up Hermione as everyone started filling in the seats at the table and piling lunch onto their plates.

“I think it’s about time,” answered Harry between bites.

“Harry, I think you should stop by Madam Bones’ office today too,” spoke Tonks from her seat near Kingsley and Hestia Jones, who had been talking auror gossip and catching up. “You could give her testimony on Fudge and Umbridge, and help the case against them.”

“Here here,” saluted Harry with his glass of pumpkin juice while wearing a devious smirk, “let’s go after lunch.”

Thirty minutes later, and Harry and Tonks were apparating near the Leaky Cauldron having told his friends to get started reading and working on meditation while he was gone. The heavily disguised and unrecognizable pair quickly made their way through the mid day crowd at the famous pub, and soon found themselves in a bustling Diagon Alley since it was probably the busiest time of the day. Entering Gringotts, they approached a goblin teller and after quietly revealing their names were lead to the familiar office of Lord Ragnok.

“Hello Lord Ragnok,” spoke both Harry and Tonks respectively as they entered the office and took the two seats facing the friendly old goblin leader.

“Greetings Lord and Lady Potter-Black,” replied the smirking goblin, as he thought back to the events of two days ago that married these two individuals unexpectedly.

“Please, just Harry and Tonks,” responded the green eyed wizard with a friendly smile that reflected both his love for his wife and humility and friendship he gives to others.

“Of course, and thank you for coming so quickly,” responded Ragnok with a growing smirk on his old face that made him look positively devious. “I asked you here to give you some information that we goblins have collected over the years of Minister Fudge’s reign. Documentation of illegal activities, money laundering, attempted seizure of accounts including your own, misappropriation of Ministry funds, payoffs, bribes, and embezzlement all connected directly to Fudge himself, and a few with links to Undersecretary Umbridge as well.”

“Really?” asked an excited and now equally smirking Harry.

“Yes, and as a friend of the Goblin Nation, it is my pleasure to provide copied proof of all documentation and activities,” he continued as he handed over a very thick folder which Harry immediately started flipping through at random as his eyes lit up like Christmas had come early.

“This is brilliant,” spoke Harry gratefully to the older goblin as he peaked through some of the more outrageous things Minister Fudge supported in his quest to pad his bank accounts and remain in power. “I can’t wait to see Fudge and Umbridge get what’s coming to them.”

“The entire Goblin Nation is quite looking forward to that day as well,” replied Ragnok equally excited as the teenage wizard. “Until then, come see me if you have any other needs.”

“Thank you Ragnok,” replied Harry happily as he rose and shook the Goblin leader’s hand saying his farewell while Tonks copied his actions automatically, still not believing what just happened inside this bank again.

“Harry, let’s get those records to Madam Bones,” spoke Tonks as they left the bank still in a slight daze at the Goblin’s incredible gift to help remove Fudge and Umbridge for good.

“Lead the way Dora,” answered Harry as he leaned over and stole a quick kiss from an all business mode Tonks, as he gave her a wide smile and looked on with twinkling eyes despite the disguises they wore she was still beautiful.

The meeting with Amelia Bones ended up taking over an hour in where Harry provided his own memories and testimony against both Fudge and Umbridge before turning over the folder of documents provided by Ragnok. Harry couldn’t help but laugh at the look of absolute glee that crossed Madam Bones’ usually stoic face as she went through one incriminating document after another. After several questions, Harry was able to wrap up his business at the DMLE with still plenty of time to spare before his jujitsu class.

Tonks spoke with Amelia for several minutes as well about leaving the auror corps to begin teaching Defense Against the Dark Arts at Hogwarts, something Amelia was quite proud of the young auror for, especially when she mentioned her niece Susan’s complaints about almost every teacher they’ve had minus Harry and Remus Lupin. Harry was glad to hear Amelia speak fondly about Remus, and it was obvious that she didn’t hold the same grossly ignorant stereotypes of werewolves that most of the wizarding population clung to, and put her a step up in Harry’s book of competent Ministry officials.

“Hey Harry,” started Tonks as they called the lift to pick them up from the DMLE floor, “let’s stop at the Department of Magical Travel and get you a License to Apparate. You could probably finish the written and practical test in a half an hour, and then we wouldn’t have to always hide the fact you’re apparating everywhere.”

“Oh yeah ...I’ve been meaning to do that,” answered Harry eagerly.



After a quick sign in and check of Ministry records to verify that despite being underage, Harry was a legal adult in the Wizarding World, and therefore eligible to test for his License to Apparate and have the Ministry tracer permanently removed from his wand. The removal of the tracer was really quite simple, just placing your wand on an unusual looking glowing white tray for two seconds until a small flicker of light signified its completion, now he would never have to worry about the Ministry fixing the tracers attuned to him. The written portion of the Apparation test took him only fifteen minutes to breeze through, and after another few minutes to learn he passed, he was given a small card with his name on top and the signature of the official who graded his written exam.

The next part was a little weird for Harry, since his examiner, a relatively attractive witch probably in her early thirties named Kathy Engel spent the majority of the twenty minute and four stop test shamelessly flirting with the famous younger wizard. By the end she had even asked for an autograph, to which he gave in, if only to get away from the very forward older woman. After the autograph, Kathy was very happy to tell him how well he did, and added her signature to his index sized card and told him to bring it back to the front counter. He handed over the twice signed card which was then recorded into Ministry records and returned to him with a small Ministry Stamp and the words 'License to Apparate' under his own name. By the time the pair did finally leave the Ministry, it was twenty to four and Harry and Tonks both legally apparated to their customary alley near his jujitsu class before spending their last few minutes snogging like crazy.

The jujitsu class went by very quick as Harry had started falling into a rhythm of figuring it out and reading his opponents body language and using his quicker reflexes to his advantage more often than not. It seemed like in no time, the class ended and he was alone with Sensei Leung preparing for his first weapons lesson. He was beyond excited and curious at what to expect with the many various weapons often used in martial arts and wondered how well he would do.

"Now Harry," started Sensei Leung in his customary quiet yet commanding voice, "many weapons used in martial arts are very

dangerous, and injuries are more likely to occur if you are not fully concentrating and focused.”

“I understand Sensei,” answered a determined Harry.

“Good, I have decided to start training you with staffs and swords as they are the two I am most familiar with,” continued Sensei. “Both have fewer injuries since we will use wooden bakas instead of real swords. I agreed to train you because in a short time you have shown an incredible aptitude for picking things up, and have a wonderful sense of determination and focus about you that makes me want to teach you everything I can. Most people take years to get to the level of progress you have made in only weeks, and as a teacher, there is no greater student and I couldn’t be prouder. But, as that teacher it is my responsibility or duty to push you to become better and realize the immense potential you have.”

“Thank you Sensei,” answered Harry swelling with pride at his teacher’s remarks, but also humbly enough to know that his teacher trusted him to maintain that focus and determination and not let it ruin him.

By the end of the hour, Harry could barely lift his arms due to their soreness and the constant tingling from using a wood staff and sword to block his Sensei’s blows. For an old muggle almost in his sixties, Sensei Leung was no slouch, and had been a rigorous teacher pushing Harry to learn quickly so as to defend himself from injury. The damn staff hurt like hell to get hit with, and was the proper motivating factor in making Harry concentrate on his blocking techniques, which proved vital throughout the course of the hour long lesson.

“You did very well today Harry,” spoke Sensei as he bowed politely to his incredibly gifted young student. “I have truly been amazed at your progress in my classes ...keep it up.”

“Thank you Sensei,” responded the happy yet exhausted Harry while returning the bow to his teacher.

“Then I’ll see you tomorrow my son,” added the old teacher happily, leaving Harry to gather his bag of clothes from earlier and make his way home.

He and Tonks slowly started the walk back due to Harry’s fatigue, but he was quite happy to have accomplished so much already today and couldn’t wait to get home and get some dinner. The couple shared a few light kisses, but didn’t really have the time to enjoy the privacy since they were due back. When they arrived at Grimmauld Place, Harry decided on a badly needed shower and arrived another fifteen minutes behind Tonks into the kitchen for dinner. Bill and the twins were in attendance, and it made for a loud and happy meal as everyone talked lively about the prospects of Fudge and Umbridge’s upcoming trials, while Harry remained quiet stuffing his face more than usual drawing quite a bit of notice.

“A little hungry there, Harry?” asked an amused Bill as Harry loaded his fourth enormous plate of roast and potatoes with vigor only rivaled by Ron.

“Oh yeah,” grinned Harry in reply before filling his mouth with another generous forkful of food, getting a few chuckles from everyone else who had finished eating.

“Don’t you worry about them dear,” spoke a happy Molly Weasley. “You’re a growing boy and need your nourishment.”

“-anks, Mrs. Weasley,” added Harry happily between mouthfuls.

That night Harry told his friends to keep reading, and that they wouldn’t really get started until they all got through Meditation book. He then planned a couple of exercises and lessons for them and the DA with the help of Tonks for a bit. By ten that evening, Hermione and Ginny stole the metamorph up to the girl’s room to talk, while Seamus, Dean, and Ron decided to play exploding snap and Neville continued to diligently read the Meditation book. Harry too moved onto a comfortable chair to read through more of his mother’s notebook and journal, and discovered the charm she was working on in the last few days of her life.

It had originally started as a baby monitor charm, so that she could hear little Harry when he woke up, and had used his stuffed dog Padfoot that he took everywhere as the transmitter or recorder. She had charmed her favorite earrings as a receiver, and was just starting to try and find a way to create indiscreet communication devices that the Order could use, but was never able to get past the initial planning stage. Harry quickly pulled out his own ever growing muggle notebook and started working out plans to develop the communication charms into something useful, as well as copying down all the spell work that went into the charms. He just needed to find a way to combine both the transmitting and receiving charms into one item, and then link them to the others.

He felt it would be a fun test to work on at night and incredibly useful if he could manage to pull it off, both for the DA and the Order. He was so wrapped up in his planning that he didn't even remember the other boys going up to bed and found himself alone in the sitting room as it neared one in the morning. Giving a slight shrug, Harry gathered his things and made his way upstairs to his bedroom, not feeling the slightest bit tired. Sitting on his sofa in his large front room of the Master Suite, Harry thought of possible ways to use the protean charm to link all the communication devices, and looked through his Family Library Ledgers for more information on the advanced charms he might need.

It wasn't long after when Tonks showed up having spent too long in her opinion in the company of giggling girls, and wanting to spend some quality time with her husband. The couple quickly made their way towards the bedroom dropping clothing the entire way, and it wasn't long until Tonks had her man exactly where she wanted him. Over the next hour, the two made good use of the silencing charm on Harry's bedroom and it was an utterly exhausted couple that lay together in bed still catching their breath minutes afterwards.

"How are we going to ...sneak around at Hogwarts?" got out Harry through his deep breaths.

"Don't worry Harry," responded the smiling and flush faced Tonks in her natural form. "The teachers' quarters are very secure, and you have your map and cloak. Plus, Dumbledore is letting me name you

my teaching assistant and sponsor the DA ...so you will have access to my quarters all year."

"Brilliant," spoke Harry before planting several long and lingering kisses on his wife's full lips. "I love you Dora."

"Me too Harry," replied a squirming Tonks, that caused Harry to raise his eyebrows in question and getting the look of desire he so loved from his wife before deciding that sleep was vastly overrated.

Friday proved to be a less eventful day, as Harry and Tonks trained in the morning while his friends continued reading the Meditation book. It gave him and Tonks three uninterrupted hours of dueling at the most intense level either had ever reached. Apparently the Sword of Gryffindor had helped Tonks quite a bit as well in the magic department, and she was much more capable of trying to keep up with Harry and his ever growing levels of magic and control. Likewise, Harry was able to push boundaries he never thought he'd reach, and was finally starting to feel better about continuing his training with his wife. It was still weird to think that they were actually married, but he couldn't see himself wanting to be with anybody else so it wasn't really a concern it was a blessing. He now had an equal partner in life and training, to accomplish his goals of living through this and coming out on top.

By lunchtime, only Neville had finished with the Meditation book and had begun trying the various exercises and techniques, with Hermione only a few hours behind him. Harry then let them take turns shooting mild stinging hexes at each other to practice both aiming and dodging, until he had to go to his jujitsu class leaving them to their own devices. The second weapons class was even harder due to Harry's soreness, but he fought through it and reminded himself to brew up some nutrient and muscle relaxing potions for himself. After dinner that night, he gave Neville a copy of the Auror Training Manual: Occlumency/Legillimancy, since he was getting closer to the next step, and he wanted him to begin preparing and focusing when next he tried to meditate. He also made copies for the others, but was holding on to them so he could change the covers to something more discreet and he could return the original to Tonks.

While everyone else mostly did their own thing that evening, Harry spent his time studying advanced charms for his communication project. He knew he wasn't quite ready to figure it all out and realized he needed even more background information before he would be close to solving the problem. Grabbing the Potter Ledger, he again found Ancient Charms of the Masters by Arvent Angellus and began to read with vigor deep into the night.

Harry woke up Sunday morning the 6th of August because of an intense pain that shot through his scar, and the briefest flashes of an image that interrupted the peaceful dreams he had enjoyed for weeks now. After going through some quick meditative exercises that helped him relax and focus on what needed to be done, he began strengthening his Occlumency shields and then spent some time to clean up and organize his mind library. It was almost unrecognizable from the beginning of the summer since it had grown and improved so much in such a short time. The shelves and overall look of the room was much more impressive, and in fact was only another of the obstacles he placed among his many defenses since the real books of knowledge were hidden in shelves behind the current meaningless ones.

It was also much more fortified from the outside, as countless obstacles and traps would hinder any from even getting that far and alert him the moment there was an intrusion into his mind, magic, or body. He had still been monitoring the scar connection to Voldemort, which hadn't so much as prickled since the little scar wars with Him and his Death Eaters a few weeks ago. Now however, he could feel a slight pressure trying to come through it, and renewed and strengthened the structures he erected to block the connection on his end, not at all interested in knowing exactly what made Voldemort this angry.

Shaking his head after coming out of his mind library and finishing his Occlumency defenses, he slowly crept out of bed careful not to wake his still sleeping wife and headed for a much needed hot shower. Saturday had proved quite exhausting and the soreness in every part of his arms, shoulders, back, and chest from the first few days of weapons training had made it hard for him to get through the whole day of activities, It wasn't until the night that he finished brewing the

muscle relaxer and nutrient potions he wanted to take to feel better and recover quicker, and knew the hot shower and some good stretching was needed before he could go for the morning run.

After the long shower, he dressed and stretched for a good while in his front room until it was time to meet everyone for the run. He smiled at Ron and Seamus who decided to come back for day two, and led the group to the park. Both newcomers complained quite a bit about soreness and Harry convinced them all to brew the same potions he had since it would be that way for a good few days or even weeks. Harry greatly enjoyed the run as he used it to continue his Occlumency and strengthening of his mind as he went over things he had been learning to solidify that knowledge even deeper into his psyche, something he found very helpful and therapeutic.

They all returned to the house for showers and breakfast before they all went down to the training chamber for their continued practice of meditation. Hermione and Ginny were even able to join Neville in successfully meditating to locate their magical core and mind libraries, a feat Neville had accomplished yesterday night. The three spent most of the morning inside their mind following Harry's suggestions of organizing and setting up their mind libraries before they started to work on defenses. Ron, Seamus, and Dean were each finishing the Meditation book, and were slowly starting to realize the possible benefits of coming around to Harry's way of thinking and preparing as they began to go through the various exercises before Harry would give them copies of the Occlumency book and they could move on.

By the afternoon session, only Neville felt somewhat secure in the organization of his mind and began establishing and strengthening defenses to protect it. The girls still had a ways to go until they felt their minds were even slightly organized, and by the time for Harry's martial arts class, he decided to give the last three the Auror Training Manual as well with instructions for them all to keep at it. He and Tonks left with plenty of time so they could go to Armand's Armory in Diagon Alley to pick up their new gear.

When they arrived at Armand's without any problems, they were greeted by a very excited shop owner telling them that their things were ready. Armand showed them the pants, vests, and cloaks he

had made and explained that he only used three and a half pieces of dragon hide leaving him with the other four plus some scraps. He promised Harry in good conscience that he couldn't charge him if he was allowed to keep the extra dragon hide which would more than cover the cost of his labor, and even said he still owed Harry something. Harry asked him to throw in a dozen wand holsters and call it even, but Armand tripled that amount before thanking the couple profusely and happily watched as they put their things in a spare trunk and shrunk it down to fit in Harry martial arts bag before waving goodbye.

The rest of the evening passed as most had before it, in a haze of jujitsu, weapons training, dinner, and studying in the sitting room so that by midnight everyone had retired to their bedrooms for the night. Harry and Tonks spent a relatively quiet night cuddling in each other's arms, happy to just talk about everything that had been happening and what it now meant to be married. They talked about tomorrow's birthday plans for Ginny who was turning fifteen, and knew they would have to rush to get back from his lesson with Sensei Leung to make it on time for the celebration and to witness his and Tonks' gift arriving which was supposed to take place at 7:30 pm just around the start of dinner.

They ended up falling asleep earlier than normal still holding onto one another, and both ended up with one of the best sleeps either of them had alone or together. They woke together with the breaking dawn as the sunlight spread through the windows and open curtains illuminating the room in a soft orange glow. They were both equally refreshed and ready to face the day, a rarity for Tonks who usually hated waking before eight, but the night of restful sleep was well worth it.

"Morning Dora," rasped out Harry scratchily as his vocal cords too needed to warm up as he hugged the young woman next to him closer into his body relishing in the joy he felt.

"Morning luv," she responded sweetly and with a chaste kiss that caused the pair to snuggle even closer to one another, neither wanting to leave the peace and comfort of the bed. "Do you have to go for your morning run today?"



“Unless you want Hermione and Ginny up here in a few minutes knocking on the door ...then yeah,” answered Harry apologetically as he shared another deeper kiss with Tonks when her pouting face became too much to ignore.

“Oh ...alright,” she answered with a playful giggle after getting in a few good snogs from her man, brightening up her face considerably.

“I’ll see you at breakfast Dora,” responded Harry before planting another soft kiss on her lips and getting up and dressed in no time to meet his friends for the morning run.

Harry was the first to the entrance hall, and while waiting for the others, did a few tai chi exercises to help him warm up and get ready for the run. Over the next fifteen minutes the rest of the group had arrived and they went to the park for their usual run. Harry again went off at his own pace, leaving his friends in the dust as they were still at the beginning stages of their physical training. After their runs they all showered before meeting everyone in the house’s kitchen for breakfast.

“Happy birthday Ginny dear,” spoke Molly happily to her youngest child and only daughter the moment she entered the kitchen and descended upon her and smothered her in one of her famous hugs.

“Thanks mum,” mumbled Ginny from within her mum’s embrace.

“Your father and I are going to take you broom shopping this afternoon for both your birthday and prefect gift,” added Molly happily as she held her daughter out in front of her with a happy yet tearful expression on her face.

“Really?” asked a wide eyed Ginny, “that’s brilliant.”

“You’ve earned it dear,” her mum responded while swelling with pride at her only girl who had grown up so much.

The day passed quickly in anticipation of Ginny’s birthday party that night, and Ginny’s excitement was somewhat distracting as Harry and

Tonks began testing Neville's and the girls' beginning Occlumency defenses. They had to give them the proper direction they needed to continue, while the boys were at varying stages of success with finding their magical cores and mind libraries and not yet ready to start on Occlumency. Neville's motivation and determination to succeed far outstripped the others, and had quickly taken a liking to the Occlumency lessons and the organization of his mind library, something he found immensely helpful in memory retention and confidence his two biggest weaknesses.

At lunch Mrs. Weasley fussed over all the kids, pestering them about how much time they were spending down in the basement training chamber. Harry suspected that she knew they were practicing magic, but insisted along with the others that they were only doing muggle exercises or watching Harry and Tonks duel, who both now could legally use magic. Either way, lunch was relatively intense and Harry told everyone to take the afternoon off since they had been spending a lot of time practicing.

Ginny had to get ready to go to Diagon Alley with her parents and used the time before they left to go through some of Ron's Quidditch magazines comparing the brooms currently on the market as she listened to her brother, boyfriend Dean, and Seamus argue the finer points of each model under consideration. By two o'clock, Arthur had returned from work and along with his wife, took their daughter shopping while the rest of the group prepared the finishing touches for the party with a lot of help from Winky and Dobby who were both besides themselves with joy at all the work they now had.

By the time Harry and Tonks left for his jujitsu class, the Weasley's had not yet returned from their shopping trip, but a few Order members and the twins had shown up in preparation. Minerva McGonagall, Hagrid, and Filius Flitwick were the first of these to arrive and were happy to get the chance to speak with several of their students outside of the school environment, and celebrate the birthday of one of the sweetest students any of them knew. Professor Flitwick was especially excited about his gift to young Miss Weasley, who he had no problems touting as one of the finest charms students he had the pleasure of teaching. The group chatted somewhat awkwardly after Harry left, since he was one of the few who wasn't

scared or intimidated by talking to his professors as real people as they all waited for the birthday girl to return.

Harry's jujitsu class and private weapons training went by quickly, leaving the young wizard relatively tired, but not nearly as bad as the first few days. By seven at night, they were already in the hidden alley seconds before apparating back to Order Headquarters just in time for dinner and the subsequent birthday party. They entered the kitchen which was crowded and colorful, with a few banners wishing Ginny a happy birthday and easily twenty people gathered around the large wooden table that was laden with food. He found a spot between the twins on one side and Bill and Fleur on the other, with Remus, Tonks, Hermione, and Ron across from them and enjoyed listening to mostly the twins' tales which were the loudest.

Shortly before both cakes had been served since Mrs. Weasley had insisted on making her little girl's cake as had Winky, the large crowd was interrupted by the arrival of three birds through an open window causing everyone to freeze. They quickly recognized Hedwig, who proudly led in the other two, a smaller brownish-red tawny owl and holding back a snigger, Harry realized that Luna had sent a stork. The three circled the kitchen once before Hedwig landed gracefully on Harry's shoulder proud to have accomplished her task as she rubbed her snowy white head playfully against the messy raven black hair of her companion. The stork and tawny both landed slightly less skillfully in front of a surprised Ginny, who after a reassuring nod from Harry and hoot from Hedwig, felt it safe to retrieve each of their burdens.

After removing the shrunken package and three letters from the stork, the beautiful white stork stretched its wings and flew to the top of an antique Hoosier cabinet to watch the action below. Bringing her attention back to the obviously young and very handsome tawny owl, Ginny removed its letter and then squeaked as the smaller owl leapt up to her shoulder to perch much like Hedwig was doing with Harry. Her eyes instantly found Harry's, and she noticed his amusement and let out another more excited squeal as she quickly ripped open the accompanying letter to recognize the untidy scrawl of her first crush.

Happy Birthday Ginny!

Hope you have the best birthday ever, and give him a good name. He's the youngest of six, with five sisters and according to the shopkeeper is 'quite the feisty one.' His words, not mine, enjoy!

Harry

Ginny let out a laugh at Harry's small birthday note and turned an amazingly bright smile towards the green eyed wizard. She thanked him several times before remembering the other letters and package in front of her. A hoot from her new friend on her shoulder brought her attention back to the young tawny owl.

"I've always wanted an owl," she replied overjoyed as she eagerly began petting her new owl's head affectionately, "I'm calling you Rusty."

"I think that's a splendid name Ginerva," spoke Albus Dumbledore happily from a few seats away, having arrived with seemingly nobody noticing.

"Thank you sir," she replied happily, and then turned to the other letters and package left by the stork. "Here ...Neville, Harry ...these are for you."

"Really?" asked an uneasy Neville, "f-from whom?"

"Luna," answered Harry with a single word that explained everything about its messenger, and several of the people around the room wondering how he knew that or what those two had been writing back and forth about.

Mrs. Weasley realized that it was time to serve cake quickly before everyone could go and open presents, but not before Ginny gave Harry a proper thank you hug under the watchful eyes of her boyfriend Dean, and Harry's unknown wife Tonks. They then all retired to the sitting room where they could open gifts and spread out and be more comfortable. Harry decided to sit off with Bill and Remus who were nearby Fleur and Tonks all in the southeast corner of the room by the fireplace where they could all catch up and talk.

They all watched as Ginny went through opening a great deal of presents, all of which she seemed to really enjoy based on her excited squeals. The twins gave her a large box of items from WWW, Bill gave her an Egyptian Rune text, and Charlie had sent a book on Dragons through his older brother since he was back on assignment at the Dragon preserve. Ron got her a broom polishing kit having known that she was getting a broom for weeks, and afterwards her parents let her open the broom they finally settled on. Instead of the Cleansweep 7 she was expecting however, it was a brand new Nimbus 2001 not even noticing that her parents had pulled a fast one on her in the Quidditch shop.

She soon moved on to other presents, and was overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of them. Dean gave her a very pretty muggle charm bracelet, while Neville got her some random magical plant and Seamus an Irish National Team Quidditch jersey. Hermione got her a pair of books that she wouldn't show anybody, and turned a brilliant shade of red when looking at while Tonks gave her a beautiful silver dress robe that would fit perfectly because of Tonks' unique talents. Luna had sent her a small box of goodies including several pictures of her and Ginny, Luna and her Dad, and even a framed one of Ginny and Dean, a charms book, a book of muggle crossword puzzles, and surprisingly for those who didn't know Luna, a charm for her new bracelet..

Kingsley, Hestia, and Mad Eye got her a wonderful silver cloak that went perfectly with the dress robes from Tonks, while Hagrid gave her a beautifully carved figurine of a unicorn. Professor Flitwick gave her a very old and rare charms book both of them and Hermione were very excited about, while McGonagall in a show of house support got her new Quidditch pads and gloves. Hermione's parents, following their daughter's advice, got Ginny three pairs of muggle hip hugger blue jeans that she absolutely loved, as did Dean.

After that, the presents ended and everyone slowly started heading for home or bed as several others continued to celebrate late into the night. Harry asked to talk to Remus in private and the two snuck away shortly after present opening ended upstairs where they could avoid the noise. They went to Remus' room and put up silencing

charms before Harry felt comfortable asking for Remus' help and possibly offering him a job.

"Remus, I wanted to ask you a huge favor," started Harry somewhat nervously, not knowing how Remus would take the request but knowing he had to find out. "I talked with Lord Ragnok at Gringotts and wanted to know if you would manage the Potter Family Vaults?"

"What ...you want me to manage them?" asked a stunned Remus.

"Yes, I want someone I know and trust, and Ragnok suggested you," continued Harry quickly. "I didn't even know it was possible, but Ragnok said you would be able to if you signed standard confidentiality agreements, and he would even give you an office at Gringotts where you could go through records and inventories."

"Wow, slow down kiddo," interrupted an overwhelmed Remus as he held up his hands for a moment to think. "What exactly do you want me to do Harry?"

"Ragnok explained it to me as managing investments and companies that the Potter Family has shares or ownership of. Inventorying and cataloguing of the contents of the Family Vault, and making new investments and business ventures," explained Harry much calmer. "I think it would only be a part time thing, but according to Ragnok, it pays well and I've even got you a 10 percent incentive bonus to any money you make for me ...it's a win-win situation."

"Can I think about it tonight," answered Remus seriously, "I'll let you know in the morning ...but it does sound kind of appealing?"

"Thanks Remus, that's all I can ask, see you tomorrow I'm going to head back downstairs," replied Harry happily, and knowing Remus would want to be alone to think just like he does.

All in all, the birthday party was a huge success and lasted until late into the night after most of the adults left giving the younger generation free reign within reason of course. Harry and Tonks were even able to slip away unnoticed after Mad Eye and Dumbledore left to share a few minutes of quality time in the downstairs loo,

something they both greatly appreciated but almost got caught in the process and decided to wait until bedtime in just a few hours. As it was, there were several tired young adults trudging up to bed nearing two am, and Harry announced that tomorrow's run was cancelled in celebration of Ginny's birthday, and decided to avoid telling everyone the real reason he wanted it cancelled was to spend the night and subsequent morning with his new wife.

Tuesday passed quickly since everyone got a late start on the day after canceling the morning run and sleeping in until breakfast. Harry and Tonks especially took full use of the extra morning hours although sleep was not one of their activities. At breakfast, Remus agreed to become the Potter Family account manager, and after performing a Wizard Oath to the Potter family and signing the standard contract Gringotts used for third party managers decided to head off to the bank and get started figuring out what he needed to do. Both the morning and afternoon practices were much more casual, and consisted of games and exercises that would help them improve aim, endurance, and agility and were absolutely loved by all.

Harry's martial arts and weapons classes had gone off without a hitch, and his evening was spent making copies of Ginny's new books and several from Hermione's personal library that he then added to the Family Ledgers. When all the adults including Tonks had gone up to bed, Harry also handed out two dragon hide wand holsters to each of the DA members for their Olivander's and spare wands. He reminded them to keep quiet about it since it was technically illegal to carry two wands, but if Death Eaters didn't follow that rule, why should they. Harry also returned all of the books he borrowed from Hermione to copy, and put them inside the Scholar's Pack he had bought several weeks earlier and handed it to her in the sitting room near the end of the night.

"What's in the bag, Harry?" asked the bushy haired girl with a questioning look at her smirking friend in front of her.

"Your new backpack," started Harry knowingly and with a growing smile, "I couldn't think of anyone else who could really use a Scholar's Pack."

"A ...a-a s-scholar's p-pack?" she asked stuttering and wide eyed and no doubt knew exactly what it was and had obviously read all about them as she timidly started to inspect it.

"You're not going to break it 'Mione," laughed Harry.

"Oh ...okay," she replied sheepishly as she finally lifted the lid to see a magical accordion style filing system that could easily hold over fifty books at a time, and let out a very un-Hermione like squeal of delight causing the rest of the group to laugh happily. "Thank you so much Harry ...I've read all about these ...how did you ever get it?"

"Got lucky I guess," he answered clearly amused at his friend and her excitement, "I found it in that odds and ends shop near Alexander's Trunks."

"It's incredible ...thank you," she repeated several times, barely believing it as she almost cried in joy.

"You're welcome Hermione," responded Harry with a happy yet tired smile. "Enjoy the rest of your evening everyone, I'm heading to bed ...and I'll see you all in the morning for our run."

"Uggh ...don't remind me," whined Seamus sarcastically, eliciting a laugh from Harry as he ascended the stairs heading to his bedroom for the night.

The second Harry entered his bedroom he froze in his track at the sight that met his incredibly wide eyes. He hadn't thought anything about Tonks heading to bed a little early, or the small look she had given him, and now he knew why. Easily one of the most beautiful and amazing things he had ever seen was lying in his bed awaiting him. His eyes couldn't see everything enough as they traveled slowly over every inch of her gorgeous skin and the sexy lacy thing that barely covered any of it.

"Do you like my new lingerie?" purred Tonks seductively as she slowly ran her hand down her body to play with the straps of her lacy black bra, corset, and thong making Harry's brain retreat even further from his body as his eyes almost popped out of their sockets.



"A ...um ...yeah," struggled the teenage wizard with great difficulty unable or unwilling to even blink in fear that the beauty before him would disappear.

"So, are you just going to stand there?" asked Tonks with a growing smile on her face because of her husband's reaction, and loving every second under his intense gaze.

That was about all the invitation and prodding that Harry needed and within a second was at the bed tearing off his own clothes without taking his eyes off of his wife's body for even a moment. He paused long enough to cast the strongest silencing charm he could, before joining Tonks in bed never in his life as happy and at peace. They didn't end up falling asleep for several more hours, testing the full limits of the silencing spell and contraception potion and for Harry, to see if he could survive on one hour of sleep.

When he woke up just in time to meet everyone downstairs before sending someone to come wake him, he rushed into workout clothes and out to meet his friends. He spent most of his run organizing his mind since last night's activities didn't really provide him with the proper amount of time or energy to accomplish it. The routine was comforting because he didn't need to think too much to go through his morning workout, and it gave him time to really think and plan for his day, not to mention cleaning everything up from the day before. He thought about how he would continue these workouts in Hogwarts in three weeks, and incorporate more exercise into the DA.

During breakfast, Harry planned out how to handle his two friend's problems when it came to their magical cores, and figured today he would finally help out Neville and Ginny as he had been promising ever since they discovered the problems with their cores. By the time everyone was in the chamber for morning practice, Harry asked Tonks to take over for the time being and work with the others while he took Ginny and Neville into the classroom corner and conjured walls to separate them from the others and the noise.

Both Neville and Ginny were looking slightly pale when they were called off with Harry, knowing it could only mean one thing and were

not sure if they were truly ready. Harry had thought a lot about how to approach their magical core problems, and figured he just needed to be honest and as up front as he could. He had already showed them his own battle at the beginning of the summer with his magical core, and now just needed to help guide them through doing just about the same thing. He explained about using Legilimancy to get inside their mind with them, where they could work together to purge the remnant dark magic that was choking both of their cores.

Entering Ginny's mind first, Harry was met by her beginning Occlumency defenses that instead of immediately trying to throw him out, brought him into Ginny's mind just as she was instructed to do. The two mental representations of Harry and Ginny inside her mind quickly grabbed hands and sought out her magical core. Similar to Harry's at the beginning of the summer, there were several dark tendrils that had been choking off her core since Voldemort's possession of her body in her first year. They weren't nearly as ingrained into her magic as Harry's has been since his were introduced at such a young age and before the development and formation of his core was completed, but it took Harry's help to will her magical core to purge the dark tendrils for good.

Shaking their heads to clear them moments later when they both left Ginny's mind, they found Neville staring wide eyed at them complaining that the feeling of dark magic was practically bleeding off of Ginny and was really creepy feeling. Harry explained that it was to be expected as he reminded them of his own pulsating incidents, before telling Ginny to monitor her magical core and the strengthened magical cords that now flowed more smoothly through her body frequently and continue working on her Occlumency defenses and mind organization while he and Neville went in for round two.

Doing the same thing and entering Neville's mind, Harry found much better defenses that were pure Neville. Plants covered almost every square inch of his classmate's mind shields, and thankfully Neville found Harry's mental representative being squeezed to death with Devil's Snare before it was too late and brought him into his mind like they had practiced. It took Harry a moment to regain his bearings, and noticed Neville's immense progress with the organization of his mind library and commented on it making even Neville's mental

representative blush at the praise. The pair then held hands in a very macho way they told themselves, before seeking out Neville's magical core and getting to work.

Harry didn't at all like the look of Neville's core, and wondered how the mild mannered and shy Neville had survived this long. No wonder his family thought him a squib, the poor boy's magical core was completely dominated by some of the foulest black magic to such a degree, that Harry was unsure if the pair of them could even succeed. The magical cords alone were practically no longer existent, and the core itself was blended and saturated with so much dark magical tendrils, this might end up even worse for his green thumb friend. Harry began talking Neville through focusing on his magic, and trying to find its pulse which took several long moments and was very different from Harry's pulsating drum beat. The slow growth and expansion of something from deep within Neville's core was the first sign of progress, but Harry was unfamiliar with it and basically sat back to watch.

"Are you making that plant grow, Neville?" asked Harry's mental representative somewhat skeptically.

"I'm focusing on ...the feeling of ...my magic ...is something happening?" asked an obviously struggling and panting Neville, and I knew he needed my help immediately but without really knowing what to do.

Harry focused on his own core and immediately felt its pulse quicken and tried to push it into what he thought was a plant growing out from within Neville's magical core slowly pushing the dark tendrils aside. Harry slowly opened himself and his magic up to Neville the moment he felt his pulses of magic kick in and the growing plant-like core reached the size of a normal magical core based on what he saw of Ginny's and slowly began blooming. Harry could tell that Neville was pushing his magic with everything he had, but didn't have enough to complete the bloom which was immediately attacked by the dark tendrils that seemingly sensed their end. Harry knew he had to help even more, and pushed another jolt of magic through Neville's plant-like core forcing the plant to blossom and the roots to shoot out in

every direction sending the dark magic tendrils fleeing as quickly as possible.

Harry, sensing an opportunity to try further try to hurt and anger Voldemort as he remembered the last time fighting off dark magic, called all the dark tendrils to him and then slammed them through the scar connection he shared with the Dark Lord. Hoping it did more than just give him a headache and an escape route for all the dark magic that had plagued Neville's core for far too long, he mostly hoped that he had managed to hurt the Dark Lord. Letting out a somewhat painful groan as his consciousness returned to his body and he rubbed his painful scar, he noticed everyone from the group standing above him and Neville who were both lying on the floor, before slowly helping them to their feet and then back into chairs.

"What the hell were you two doing?" yelled Tonks in both anger and fear as her eyes locked onto the bright green one's of her stupid husband, and he immediately felt like an idiot for just once again jumping into the fire like a Gryffindor.

"Purging Neville's core," answered back Harry slowly and still in some pain even though he was able to reseal the connection on his end after sending through all the dark tendrils to his favorite Dark Lord. "It was harder than I thought."

"Why?" asked the always inquisitive Hermione.

"Bellatrix used the cruciatus curse on me too as a baby," started Neville quietly, and everyone was too stunned to make a single noise having no idea how to respond. "My core obviously hadn't fully formed by then, so the remnant dark magic was much more integrated than normal."

"Oh Neville, I'm so sorry," cried Hermione softly having never thought about that, and having no idea how to respond and how horrible that must have been.

"Don't worry, it's not something I've really told anyone about," answered the shy boy who then turned to Harry seriously. "I'll never forget what you did for me Harry, thank you."

"I'm just glad it worked mate," answered a smiling green eyed wizard. "You and Ginny should take it easy for the rest of the day, and keep checking on your cores to make sure everything has been eliminated for good. I was really pleased with both of your Occlumency, and encourage you to keep it up ...you will all be tested once more before we all leave for school."

"But we've just started on Occlumency?" asked Ron, as he motioned to Dean and Seamus who both nodded along.

"So did they," answered Harry with a smirk, "and I'll be testing you three after lunch."

"But I'm still sorting memories," added Seamus apprehensively, "I haven't even started on defenses yet."

"Well, then you'll go last," answered a smug Harry, "now ...let's go eat, I'm starved."

Lunch was spent happily chatting with everyone, and none seemed better than Neville and Ginny. During the afternoon session, Harry and Tonks finally tested the last three's Occlumency progress, and had to give them each several pointers and some much needed help in the area, they continued doing some fun drills. The drills had actually been both a lot of fun, and also very rewarding as everyone in the groups aim, endurance, and agility had all increased by leaps and bounds in just the few short days of constantly working. Harry said his goodbyes in the late afternoon, and he and Tonks left to go to his martial arts lessons giving them plenty of extra time to catch up on the walk from their abandoned alley to the dojo.

His jujitsu class and then private weapons lesson both passed as usual while Harry was really beginning to understand more and more every day and applying it to his workouts. It wasn't long before the couple was back at Grimmauld Place in time for dinner, which was currently being attended by several Order members as they waited for their Wednesday night meeting to begin at eight. Harry got a seat next to Remus and the two chatted a little about Remus' first two days as the Potter account manager. Remus gave Harry a very hard

look at one point when he mentioned discovering something about his heritage and marital status and talking with Lord Ragnok about another Family vault Harry was in control of. Harry gave a weak smile, and reminded Remus why he had him take the Oath and sign the contract because that was not information that was to ever get out.

“You would have made a wonderful Marauder Harry,” spoke the werewolf with a fake glare that quickly faded into a reminiscent smile.

“Thanks Moony, that means a lot,” answered a smiling Harry.

At one minute to eight o'clock however, the light atmosphere left instantly as a limping Snape entered the kitchen still wearing his Death Eater robes and clutching his mask in his white knuckled hand. The few gasps and wide eyed looks caused the rest of the guests to take notice of the slightly shaky spy as his dark almost black eyes swept the room until they landed on a curious pair of green ones that gave him pause. The dark eyes narrowed quickly at Harry, and everyone knew something bad was about to happen.

“What did you do to the Dark Lord today, Potter?” snapped a venomous Potions master as he glared at his least favorite student and person as most in attendance gasped in fear.

Harry said nothing despite a few more gasps and now curious looks directed at him from around the table, and stayed unmoving and matching the dark eyed glare he was receiving. Pushing up his Occlumency defenses, he allowed a smirk to form on his lips as he watched the black eyes widen and his body began shaking in rage. For a second, color started rising into Snape's cheeks and face much like Uncle Vernon, and Harry knew that he had successfully blocked the passive legillimancy of the greasy git and he was not happy about it.

“Harry?” asked Albus Dumbledore kindly, as he too turned his gaze upon him, although with much softer and twinkling eyes.

“I sent him a little gift through our link earlier,” shrugged Harry easily, “it was no big deal.”

“No big deal! When was this Potter?” snapped Snape angrily.

“Um ...probably about 11:30, maybe 11:40, does that sound about right Neville?” answered Harry with a quick glance and smile in Longbottom’s direction.

“What does Longbottom have to do with anything?” fumed the still very pissed off potions master as his glare moved for a second over to Neville before settling back on Harry’s.

“Who said he did?” mocked Harry back sarcastically, knowing he was pushing Snape and not caring one bit about it.

“Damn you Potter,” hissed Snape, and in a flash pulled his wand and hissed, “legilimens,” intending to get the information at any cost, but forgetting one small problem ...Potter now had Occlumency defenses, and quite good ones.

Snape only had a short second to look at the defenses spread out before him before he was engulfed in a veritable wind storm of magical power that ripped and whipped him around like a rag doll, and trapping him within the tendril like currents as he was seemingly pulled further and further from his objective. In an unusual and unpleasant lurch, Snape was ejected from the boy’s mind only to find himself still struggling with the magical tendrils as a representation of Potter appeared before him and began routing through his own mind, tearing through his defenses like tissue paper and then releasing him moments later to collapse on the floor with a groan of pain and massive headache.

“Harry, what did you do?” spoke Albus in a reprimanding tone as he rushed to his spy’s side to make sure he was still alive.

“I simply kicked him out of my mind, unless you condone his methods of seeking information from school kids,” stated Harry flatly as he met the piercing blue eyes evenly and without remorse.

“I can assure you Harry, that I do not condone that method,” answered Albus honestly as he met his students gaze and knew better than to try where his spy failed.

“Good, because today’s attack was no different than earlier in the summer,” stated Harry with a lopsided smile.

“Ah, very well Harry,” replied Albus sincerely. “If you and your friends could adjourn to the sitting room, we are going to start our meeting now.”

“Sure thing sir,” answered Harry, while quickly grabbing his still half eaten plate of food and retiring to the sitting room with his friends around him.

They heard Dumbledore call for Madam Pomfrey to attend to Snape before the doors were closed and silencing charms were placed, and continued to the sitting room. Neville and Ginny both thanked Harry again for his help today, and talked about intense feelings of energy and euphoria that they’ve felt most of the evening. Harry assured them that he felt the same way, and it was just their bodies reacting to having their own pure magic back in control. He ignored the game of Gobstones that started, and sat in what was quickly becoming his favorite chair by the fire to finish his dinner and then read up on charms texts to help with his mother’s communication charm project. It was still early when he decided to go to upstairs to his bedroom since the Order meeting was still going on, begging off being tired from today’s magical core purges and wanting some time alone.

The Order meeting that had started out so great with Snape getting his just desserts, quickly turned into absolute boredom for Tonks as she suffered through countless reports of suspicious activity. They spent hours dissecting what it was Harry was doing to the Dark Lord, and wanted to just scream at everyone to ask him themselves if they wanted answers so badly. She knew that eventually she would be asked to divulge information on Harry’s activities within the house and his lessons, but wasn’t really looking forward to it. She usually was just vague about the magical training, and focused more on the physical exercises and improvements since everyone was mostly aware of them and she always had to make sure with Harry that she wasn’t revealing anything he didn’t want them all to know. The meetings were just so boring, that she spent most of the time watching everyone else and thinking about what an incredible and



unusual summer it's already been and how little these people really knew about working to defeat Voldemort.

AN: Three more to go, almost done ...thank Merlin! Thank you readers and reviewers.

To LilyJames Addict: Several months ago I woke up in the middle of the night with a beginning story idea in the first person, which I have since spent a lot of time on, and it has totally thrown me for a loop. I find myself now constantly having to pay attention to pov, when I never did in the past since it was always third person narrative. Sorry, I'll try to watch out for those, and thanks for the heads up.

## Chapter 18

It had been an entire week since the Order meeting and Occlumency incident with Professor Snape and as Harry sat in the kitchen that Wednesday night the 16th of August, at dinner waiting for the Order members to arrive for tonight's meeting, he reflected on what a great week it had been for everybody. The most notable things were Neville's incredible progress in all things both physical and magical ever since Harry helped him with the purge and cleansing of his core. The Occlumency had also given him much more time to study and practice during the nights, and was well ahead of most of the DA members since he had also already read the year's text book Defense set.

He no longer even resembled the terrified pudgy boy he was upon entering Hogwarts, and the new found confidence was a far cry from his previous self doubt. Neville and Harry were both about the same height, and only a few centimeters below the tall and gangly Ron. He had definitely filled out over the last year as well and now had a strong thickness to his frame which was being aided by the continual running and practicing. For the last week Neville had studied as hard as Harry in an effort to push himself to get even better, and had begun distancing himself from the rest of the group, something everyone seemed to be noticing.

The morning and afternoon DA sessions were doing well because of the small manageable group size and pairing them with partners had proved invaluable. Dean and Seamus were making the least improvements as neither had great interest in dedicating their time to studying or physical fitness, but were at least smart enough to realize the benefits of extra instruction from both Tonks and Harry. Ginny and Ron both took all aspects of the extra training in stride, learning quickly how important physical endurance was to a magical duel, and soaked up the many lessons from Harry and Tonks knowing their very lives may some day depend on it.

Hermione and Neville however, were in a separate class all to themselves. Hermione's book knowledge and spell repertoire balanced out by Neville's raw power and increasing agility and strength made for quite the formidable pair. The pair also pushed

each other to work extra hard on their shortcomings, which were the strengths of their partners. Their group the most demonstrated the best competitive balance as they constantly worked both together and separately to improve themselves and best their partner. The physical exercises and partners was working so well, that Harry knew he would have to implement something similar to the DA when school started back up.

Harry's own martial arts and private weapons class was also going well, and he was finding himself less sore and growing stronger with each lesson while learning new tricks and techniques at an amazing rate. Only really Sensei Leung was able to consistently beat him, since he had seemingly surpassed his other classmates in terms of speed, endurance, and his slowly growing techniques and experience. His work on his mother's communication charm project also seemed to be progressing, especially after his discussion about the extendable ears with Fred and George one night after they showed for dinner. He was even hoping to have a working prototype soon and maybe even before school started if he was lucky.

The only reason he hadn't worked even more on it, was because it cut into his and Tonks' time alone at night. Just when he was starting to think of all those great nights spent with his wife over the course of the week, he was broken from his wonderful thoughts by the arrival of Albus, Filius, Minerva, Hagrid, and Severus. It seemed that the Hogwarts contingent had finally arrived for the weekly meeting, and not wanting to get in the way Harry quickly grabbed his things and gave a nod to those around him. He then stood and prepared to leave the kitchen when his Headmaster's voice gave him pause.

"Harry," started Albus uncertainly, causing the bright green eyes of his student to fall on him in question. "I was hoping you could stay for the beginning of the meeting?"

"Okay sir," he answered flatly and sat back down and finished eating, ignoring the looks of excitement on several of his friends' faces and the few angry scowls of several more Order members.

"I must ask the rest of you to adjourn to the sitting room, Mr. Potter will join you shortly," continued the Headmaster as he dismissed the students with his customary twinkling eyes.

It was with only a small amount of grumbling that Ron and the others left the kitchen with a few last looks to their leader and friend as they left. It was another ten minutes until everyone else arrived and the meeting could get underway. Harry received a great many glares directed towards him as he waited to find the reason he was being included in the usually off-limits Order meeting, but chose to ignore those staring at him and wait patiently talking to Tonks, Bill, and Remus about inconsequential things.

"I thank you all for coming," began Albus Dumbledore importantly as his twinkling blue eyes scanned the crowd of Order members affectionately. "Many of you have probably noticed the presence of Mr. Potter ...he is here at my request to hopefully clear up some questions that were raised at last weeks' meeting."

"Such as?" asked a less than patient teenager, who didn't feel the need to waste time playing useless games as his eyes evenly held those of his Headmaster who simply sighed in resignation.

"How about we start with what occurred last week between yourself and Voldemort?" asked Dumbledore with a hint of authority and professionalism, and ignoring the startled gasps at the dark lord's name.

"There's little to tell sir," answered Harry calmly, "I simply sent him some magic through our link ...the end."

"What magic or kind of magic did you send?" asked Dumbledore while refusing to break the younger wizard's eye contact.

"I'm not sure that's my information to tell sir," answered an unflinching and emotionless Harry.

"You arrogant brat," snapped Severus viciously, "the world does not revolve around you Potter!"

“Dobby,” called Harry kindly, while completely ignoring the ranting and raging Potions Master or the curious looks everyone seemed to send him upon calling a house elf that promptly appeared before him with a crack. “Dobby ...could you do me a favor and ask Neville if it’s alright that I tell everyone what we did last week?”

“Of course Master Harry Potter sir,” squeaked Dobby excitedly and with a small bow before he snapped his fingers and disappeared with another crack for several tense moments.

Crack. “Master Longbottom says its up to you sir,” answered Dobby with another deeper bow to Harry.

“Thank you Dobby,” smiled Harry kindly as the house elf beamed proudly and disappeared with another crack.

Harry casually leaned back, thinking about how and if he really wanted to say anything to the Order and ignoring some of the continuous glares in his direction. Snape was one who was quickly losing his patience again, and decided that he might as well get on with it and answer the questions fully. Looking back to the Headmaster he gave him a small nod in acceptance and settled in to tell his story.

“Last Wednesday I decided to help Neville with purging his magical core of the remnant dark magic that had been suffocating it since the Lestranges attacked him and his parents fourteen years ago. Since I was helping and aiding him through a mental link, I was able to direct that purged dark magic through me and my scar connection similar to how I did it at the beginning of the summer,” Harry answered flatly and honestly, once again holding the gaze of Dumbledore as if to ask his follow up question.

“Very interesting,” contemplated Dumbledore aloud and seemingly in deep thought. “I was unaware that Neville had suffered any magical damage in the attack on the Longbottoms.”

“M-me t-too,” sniffed an obviously distraught Augusta Longbottom who sat speechless throughout Harry’s explanation as the terror and fear from that attack seemed to come back to her full force.

"I am sorry Mrs. Longbottom, but you should know that Neville's now fine ...and in fact his magic is stronger than it ever was," answered Harry with a small comforting smile towards the Longbottom Matriarch.

"Are you currently training your friends in magic, Harry?" asked a twinkling blue eyed Albus as he tried to keep the meeting running and get at least some of his questions answered from the very well guarded young teenager who had grown up so much this summer.

"Yes," answered Harry somewhat reluctantly, but drawing a small smile from the old Headmaster's face and a shriek of outrage from Molly Weasley.

"WHAT?!"

"Molly, it's alright," spoke a placating Albus Dumbledore, while trying to reassure and calm the angry Weasley matron, "we will discuss this later."

"But what about the Ministry?" she asked hysterically.

"The wards on this property, and especially the fidelius charm pretty much ensure that the Ministry will never know what goes on inside this house," answered Professor Flitwick, the resident charms expert which luckily seemed to calm the hysterical mother on that point, and made Harry wonder why nobody told them they could be practicing magic at Headquarters all this time and those underage didn't need to be using spare wands.

"On another note," spoke Dumbledore trying to keep the meeting on track, "you and your friends were asked to attend the Death Eater trials this Friday for the battle that occurred on your birthday. You wont be required to testify because we feel we already have numerous other eyewitnesses including Bill, Arthur, Kingsley, and myself, but we would like to have you all there just in case."

"Thank you sir," answered Harry with a grateful smile at being included and involved.

"My final question for you Harry, has to do with your visit to Madam Bones' office about the upcoming investigation into Minister Fudge and Undersecretary Umbridge?" asked Albus slowly, while keeping a critical eye on the young wizard's body language which unfortunately gave him nothing, just like his facial expressions or eyes.

"I gave testimony against them," answered Harry flatly.

"May I ask what testimony?" continued Dumbledore eagerly.

"I'm sorry sir, but as a witness of the court, I can't tell you until the trial in nine days," started Harry evenly, "however, I can say that it should guarantee them both a small stay in Azkaban."

"Harry, do you think that's wise?" asked Dumbledore sincerely. "I know that Cornelius is not ideal, but he is a known quantity."

"Yeah ...it's known that he is an ass and has done everything in his power to discredit us ...and ignored the return of Voldemort ...and broken countless wizarding laws ...and tried to steal mine and Sirius' money," argued back Harry somewhat sarcastically to a now wide eyed group of adult witches and wizards who had no idea how bad the current Ministry regime was.

"I guess we can see your point Harry. Thank you for taking the time to answer some of our questions, if you'll excuse us now ...we still have quite a bit to cover tonight," replied Albus.

"Of course," responded Harry as he quickly rose to leave but had to leave at least one final parting shot. "I mean, it's not like your talking about anything that could affect my life."

Once Harry was out of the Order meeting he let out a relieved breath as he calmed the tension that had formed by being questioned on the spot. He didn't much feel like going to the sitting room to get bombarded with even more questions from his friends, so instead went upstairs to his bedroom to take his mind off things. He ended up continuing to read up on almost every charm text he could get his hands on over the last week, and felt prepared to even sit his NEWT

exam if he had to, all in preparation to complete his mother's communication charms project which he at least was feeling closer to solving.

He continued his studying undisturbed until Tonks showed up after midnight to tell him what went on in the rest of the Order meeting after he left. Apparently Dumbledore put forth the recommendation to let Harry and his friends join the Order, since it would be their war as well in a few years if not already. The Order was mainly split on the idea with herself, Bill, Moody, Remus, and Kingsley who supported them joining while the others protested it. Snape and Molly being the loudest in the against camp, and had several others following them and curbing the issue for a later date.

Harry didn't really care about the Order as much any more, probably because Tonks had been telling him just about everything since the beginning of the summer, and in turn he told her all about his progress with the communication charm and some of the more interesting charms he had learned during his course of study. They ended up brainstorming late into the night about Defense against the Dark Arts and the continuation of the DA, making lesson plans for all age groups and skill levels to help them both for the coming term. It was almost two in the morning when they finally managed to fall asleep in one another's arms.

Harry woke up Thursday morning at the normal time and quickly met up with his friends for their morning run. During their pre-run stretching, Harry explained to them what was asked of him in the Order meeting and also the plans for tomorrow's Death Eater trials they were all attending. After the morning run and breakfast, Harry worked everyone extra hard since he was giving them the next day off to attend the trials. They spent both the morning and afternoon focusing on their aiming, blocking, and dodging of magical attacks as they took turns shooting hexes at one another in the morning and had mock duels in the afternoon.

Harry left everyone to work with their partners as he and Tonks went to his martial arts class followed by an hour with weapons afterward. He and Sensei Leung were now working almost exclusively with swords, and continually making them heavier even if they were



practice swords to help build the arm strength needed to handle any sword for a length of time. The results were truly remarkable, and while Harry would never be a body builder, his strength was almost unrivaled for his size and he had really grown substantial muscle definition over the summer. The young newly weds returned to Headquarters with Harry's arms and shoulders sore once again, but with a happy smile on his face from the praise of his Sensei and wife.

Dinner that night was spent talking about the Battle at the Burrow as the papers were calling it, and everyone going over what they remembered from that night. Harry and Tonks both remained quiet throughout the talking, neither really wanting to remember that night too much regardless of the fact that Harry hadn't really suffered too bad after taking the killing curse. Bill seemed to read and understand Harry's anxiety about again surviving the un-blockable Aveda Kedavra, and left it out of his description of the night's events as one of the only few to have witnessed the action first hand. Nobody else seemed to want to mention it either, and Harry hoped that it would also stay out of tomorrow's court record and gave a small smile in appreciation to the intelligent curse breaker.

After dinner that evening, Remus managed to corner Harry and ask to speak with him about the many things he had discovered about the Potter Family, and the status of his vaults. Harry reluctantly agreed, and along with Tonks meet up with him after everyone else headed to bed for the night. Remus explained everything he had done so far, namely cataloguing the vault and the many investments and holdings to better understand everything. He also wondered why James never mentioned his families' relationship to Godric Gryffindor, but eventually understood the need for secrecy in that department, and encouraged Harry to do the same. Remus avoided the topic everyone knew was coming until the very end, and having Tonks present didn't make it any easier.

"Are you planning on telling anybody that you two are now married?" he asked in genuine curiosity, and a small smile tugging at the corners of his mouth.

"That depends, how did you take the news Remus?" asked Harry, curious to his parents' friend's answer.

"Truthfully, I almost had a heart attack ...and I already knew you where sleeping together," the older wizard answered honestly.

"See, that's exactly why we are not telling anybody," spoke Tonks with a somewhat disappointing tone, "they wouldn't understand."

"You may be right," replied Remus, "but after thinking more about it, and how you have both been this summer, I know you two are very good for one another."

"Thanks Remus, but to the wizarding world I'll always be the Boy-Who-Lived, even with our marriage legitimate in the eyes of magic, they'd never accept Tonks," added Harry intently. "Think about Molly's reaction or Snape's or anyone in Hogwarts ...nobody is ready to see me as anything other than a student, a pawn, a symbol of light and hope, the chosen one. I love you Remus, you are my friend and the only connection I have left to my parents and family, but you are much more accepting than others in this world."

"Yeah, I didn't even think of Molly's reaction, or the Daily Prophet's if they ever got a hold of it," responded Remus.

"Now you see why we're not telling anyone," answered Tonks.

"Trust me Remus, I would like nothing more than to announce it to the world, and stop sneaking around, but the wizarding world isn't ready for it yet. I love Dora, and only she really and truly knows everything about the real me, the person behind all the titles and symbols; my history, my future, my dreams, my nightmares, my hopes, my fears, my magic, and my life."

"James used to get all dramatic and poetic whenever talking about Lily too," chuckled Remus good naturedly. "I'm really happy for both of you."

"Thank Remus," the couple responded in unison before sharing some happy hugs, saying their goodnights and heading to the master bedroom for some more time as man and wife, glad to have at least one person in their corner and in the know.

The next morning at breakfast, Harry's good mood from the enjoyable night spent with Tonks disappeared with the arrival of the Daily Prophet. It was filled with articles about today's trial, the attack on the Burrow, and of course a glowing article about Harry's involvement and bravery in the face of Death Eaters by one, Rita 'Fucking' Skeeter. Thank Merlin she wasn't actually at the battle, and had only seemed to have heard about it third hand and sensationalized the heroic actions and attributed them to the wizarding world's scorned hero and birthday boy.

"So, I'm a hero again," laughed Harry sarcastically after quickly reading the article and moving on to actually eating some breakfast, "I sure hope we don't run into her today."

"At least she's not pushing her normal drive," added Hermione hopefully knowing exactly who Harry was talking about.

"Yeah ...it could be a lot worse," echoed Ron knowingly.

"True," answered a reluctant Harry before finishing his meal and standing up. "I need to go put on my dress robes."

"Oh ...me too," added Ron, who was then followed by the other three boys leaving the already dressed girls behind muttering about stupid lazy boys.

The large group consisting of seven of the nine Weasleys (no Percy or Charlie), two Longbottoms, Harry, Hermione, Dean, and Seamus all joined Mad-Eye, Kingsley, Hestia, and Tonks who were acting as guards at the long loop port-key Dumbledore provided them. At precisely 9am, the port-key took the large group to the Ministries Atrium amidst a very large crowd of Ministry employees, reporters, and spectators all eager to be on hand for this large and important public trial, and unfortunately for Harry, to get a glimpse of the Boy-Who-Lived. He was spotted almost immediately upon landing hard on his feet from the uncomfortable method of travel, since their group was so big many noticed quickly. He was immediately swarmed by eager wizards and witches hoping to meet him or sometimes just

touch him and ravenous reporters who seemed to make it their mission to yell the most inappropriate questions.

Harry wanted to scream in frustration at the crowds' mob mentality, and shuddered as questions of all sorts were yelled out for all to hear. By the time the fourth grey haired witch had 'offered her services' very loudly, they had somehow managed to push their way to the guard station and wand check point. They were on the guest list for the trial, since they had several of the key witnesses in their group, and they were allowed in ahead of the mass public and were able to escape the large crowds who were now scrambling to try to keep up with the Boy-Who-Lived. Harry and the large group he came with all entered an empty lift together and peacefully managed to leave the circus of reporters and people behind as they descended down to the Ministry Courtrooms.

Harry was glad to be among the first to enter the waiting Courtroom ten, and quickly found a seat in the midst of his own large group to help avoid being accosted by too many others on their way to their seats. It was an almost thirty minute wait until the courtroom truly began to fill to capacity and shortly afterwards the large entrance doors closed to signify the start of the proceedings. Within minutes the members of the Wizengamot entered and filled into their prime seats at the head of the proceedings, with Madam Bones sitting in the central chair of judges between Minister Fudge and Albus Dumbledore.

"Welcome everyone to Wizengamot Trial number 23461 on this Friday, the 18th of August, 1996," spoke Madam Bones with loudly and with authority as the crowds quickly quieted to listen. "Due to the large amount of defendants in this case, they will be brought in later by group, but first we will begin with the questioning of witnesses."

The trial seemed to pass very quickly, as evidence was presented against the captured Death Eaters by Albus Dumbledore himself, Bill and Arthur Weasley, and the Head investigating Auror, Kingsley Shacklebolt. Out of the twenty-four captured Death Eater defendants, only three did not have traces of Dark magic on their wands, and where therefore only given ten year Azkaban sentences for having the Dark Mark, attacking wizards and witches with intent to harm, and

conspiracy against the Ministry and people of Britain. The other twenty-one Death Eaters including Inner Circle member John Gibbons were each given life sentences in Azkaban with very little resistance from their much cheaper and less experienced solicitor, Mr. Wendell Johnstone.

Harry spent most of the trial scowling at Minister Fudge, who tried to take any and every opportunity to promulgate his greatness for the Ministry and the people. By lunchtime, when the trial was winding down, Harry felt as if he was at a Fudge political rally with all the propaganda the Minister seemed to be pushing and all the strides his Ministry was making. When the verdicts had finally been read after a very short Wizengamot deliberation, Harry was grateful to be getting away from the portly and completely delusional Minister as the courtroom quickly started emptying out.

On their way to the lobby, they found several Fudge loyalists placing banners and placards all over the atrium in support of their Minister and his own upcoming trial set for next week that they were calling a farce. Deciding to add his own banner at the last second to even the score, he whispered a quiet incantation his mother's journal mentioned being a favorite of the Marauders and got one good look at his creation before it was his turn in the Floo, and was off in a flash of green flames and echoing laughter.

--FUDGE & UMBRIDGE: COUNTDOWN TO AZKABAN: 7 DAYS—

Harry arrived at the Leaky Cauldron behind Ron, and before Bill and Arthur who both arrived coughing up soot from laughing as they left the Ministry. Harry put on an innocent look on his face that fooled neither of the two Weasley men, who had often dealt with the same look from the twins, but chose not to comment on the banner. Everyone ended up having a large meal together at the Leaky Cauldron on the newly wealthy Arthur Weasley, who had been the primary recipient of all damage charges and fees paid by the now convicted Death Eaters.

Awarded by the court for the rebuilding of their family home, Arthur was given fifty thousand galleons in damages and restitution, three times the value of the Burrow or what he would normally make in a

given year. Along with the money from Sirius' recent Will, the family was doing remarkably better and more than happy to share their good fortune with their friends and extended family around them. By two in the afternoon, everyone had finished eating and began returning to Order Headquarters except for Harry and Tonks who decided to go into muggle London for a brief shopping trip on their way to Harry's martial arts class at four.

They spent the time checking out a great many shops and stands, and even found a few t-shirts that Tonks had to have, and Harry was more than happy to oblige after seeing her try them on. Harry even found some t-shirts with 'www' printed on them, and had to buy a pair for Fred and George even if they wouldn't know they really meant 'world wide web'. The couple even spent plenty of time snogging between stops and really enjoyed the little bit of time they could spend together more freely in public, both hoping to do more of it after the war ended and Voldemort was gone.

They easily made their way towards Sensei Leung's dojo with plenty of time for class and to get properly warmed up. The advanced class went by quickly, and Sensei was eager to keep pushing the young teenager in his weapons training. Harry had already told his teacher of returning to boarding school in Scotland soon, and the old master had responded by increasing the tempo and training even more to make up for the small amount of time they had left. By the time of their return to dinner that night, Harry's arms and shoulders once again stung and burned with soreness even after taking a quick shower in the dojo's changing rooms after the grueling practice.

Most of the meal that night was spent in good spirits after the success with the Wizengamot trials of the captured Death Eaters, and with the younger kids starting to get excited for the upcoming year at Hogwarts that was now only two weeks away. Mrs. Weasley promised another trip to Diagon Alley to get last minute things for the school year after the Fudge trials in exactly one week. Professor Dumbledore announced that Mrs. Finnegan has returned from her sister's, and asked for Seamus and Dean to come home this weekend, and that they would see them on the First of September. Augusta Longbottom also announced that their Manor had begun

restoration, and that the house elves would have it livable shortly after the start of the Hogwarts term.

“How many house elves do you have?” asked Hermione in a slightly accusatory tone that most at the table knew to be weary about.

“Six ...and they’ve been godsendes helping run the Manor and raising my Neville,” answered a very proud Augusta Longbottom as she shot her grandson a warm smile that gave him a feeling of pride he had only recently come to expect from his usually stoic grandmother.

“But that’s—,” raged Hermione before being interrupted.

“That’s wonderful,” interjected Harry loudly, and cutting off Hermione’s rant with a significant glare that quieted her immediately ...or at least for now. “I bet they were a tremendous help ...I don’t know what I’d do without Dobby and Winky.”

“My Head Elf Misty was actually the elf who watched and cared for me when I was growing up, and now it’s her family that continues to watch and care for mine,” spoke Augusta with a warm reminiscent smile that lit her face into something much less rigid looking, making both Neville and Harry smile in return as Hermione seethed quietly for now.

Sure enough, as soon as dinner ended and the teenagers were back in the sitting room, Hermione rounded on Harry angrily. Harry for his part just stood there and let his friend rant and vent her anger while vaguely paying attention to the usual SPEW drivel. However after fifteen minutes of more and more of the same, and listening to Hermione’s voice grow hoarser by the second, Harry had enough and lost it on his friend.

“Hermione, SHUT UP!” shouted Harry suddenly, and startling everyone in the room into absolute silence. “Do you even know what happens to unbound house-elves? NO ...then shut up until you do!”

“What happens to them?” asked a slightly fearful Ginny as she looked between Harry’s annoyed face and Hermione’s hysterical one,

seemingly about to blow another top and go on another ill-informed rant.

“They go insane, and then they die,” answered Harry with an aggravated growl as he directed his answer right at Hermione, challenging her to say anything before he rummaged through his pockets looking for his Library Ledger. “Read this, then we’ll talk about it,” he added after finding the Ledger, and the very old tome called History of Elves, he made an exact copy for his bookworm friend to read.

After the small confrontation with Hermione, Harry retreated upstairs to his bedroom to work on his mother’s communication charm project until it was time for bed not wanting to be around the others. Tonks arrived not too much later in very good spirits after talking with Minerva and Filius about the upcoming school year, and what she could expect in terms of hours in class, grading, and free time. The young newly weds played in bed late into the night, enjoying the closeness they had come to expect from their intimacy and new marriage.

When the pair did finally drift off to sleep it was in a tangled mess of limbs and sweaty body parts, with content smiles on their flushed but peaceful faces. Harry however did not get the rest he was hoping for, and ended up sleeping fitfully due to the twinging and prickling of his scar for most of the night. When he awoke in a cold sweat only an hour into his sleep, he was instantly able to connect the scar’s unrest to Voldemort’s current fury and rage at the day’s Wizengamot trials for his twenty-four captured and now imprisoned Death Eaters.

Harry went through some Occlumency exercises to help calm him and reinforce his mental defenses. He ensured that Voldemort hadn’t breached his scar connection before getting up and deciding to get dressed and ready for the day. The weekend passed relatively quickly with much of the same schedule of running, DA training and dueling, martial arts and weapons class, studying and sleeping. Sunday afternoon while Harry and Tonks were at Harry’s class, Mad-Eye and Bill returned Dean and Seamus to the Finnegan household and put up several wards to better protect the property and alert the Order if the wards were ever breached.



That night was a little subdued for the remaining teenagers, and especially for Ginny who was sad that she wouldn't get to see her boyfriend for almost two weeks. It was also the night of the full moon, and everyone was worried about Remus who had been looking progressively worse over the days leading up to it. Harry and Tonks had used different excuses and retired early to work together on the communication charm and finalize their lesson plans for the upcoming school year for both DADA and the DA. It was well past two in the morning when they finally fell asleep that night, hoping everyone would be in better spirits come tomorrow.

Harry awoke Monday morning at sunrise, and quickly extricated himself from bed before getting dressed and heading downstairs for his morning run. He met a much smaller group of only Neville and Ron, since Hermione was consoling Ginny who didn't feel up to running after her late night of pining for Dean. The three boys ran together through the park, Harry continuously doubling back to get the necessary cardio workout, and enjoyed a little friendly banter as they jogged the park's trails. Harry showed them some good Tai Chi exercises that would help relax their breathing and sore muscles after running, before returning to the house for showers and breakfast.

After breakfast, the remaining six went down to the training chamber and Harry decided to mix up their pairs for a few days, and put Neville with Ginny, and Ron with Hermione. It also would hopefully let Ron and Ginny catch up to Neville and Hermione who had progressed far more than any of the others so far. They worked until lunch on many of the standard drills they had begun with weeks ago, and Harry told them to keep it up on their own after lunch since he and Tonks had to meet with Madam Bones this afternoon about the upcoming trials of Fudge and Umbridge.

Upon entering the Ministry, the couple had to share a laugh as they watched a team of Ministry workers still trying to take down the banner that Harry had put up as he left the courtroom on Friday with very little success. Sharing a smile with Tonks, the pair made their way through the Ministry checkpoint and down to Madam Bones' office in the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. They only had to wait a few moments until they were led into the office, where

Amelia Bones was already speaking to a tall dark brown haired middle aged wizard, with very neatly trimmed hair and wearing impeccably tailored and expensive looking robes in the deepest purple Harry had ever seen.

"Ah, Mr. Potter, Auror Tonks ...or is it Professor Tonks," greeted Amelia Bones pleasantly upon seeing her newest guests, causing the well dressed man to stand as well to meet the newcomers. "I'd like to introduce you both to Tobias Thicknese; he will be the solicitor running our case ...Harry Potter ...and Professor N. Tonks."

"It's a pleasure to meet you sir," greeted Harry firmly as he reached and shook the older man's hand, "and please, call me Harry."

"Thank you Harry," responded Thicknese easily, "and please call me Tobias ...and that goes for you too, Professor Tonks," he finished with a slight bow of his head.

"Just Tonks please," she answered with a friendly smile before turning back to her former boss with a respectful nod, "hello director."

"It's Amelia now Tonks, and that goes for you too Harry," answered the usually stern looking woman who now had a very pleasant smile on her face making her look a lot more like her niece Susan as she shook everyone's hand and motioned for them all to sit. "We are just waiting on Rufus Scrimgeour, the Auror in charge of the DMLE's investigation into Fudge and Umbridge."

The small group didn't have to wait long for the tall grey haired old auror to arrive, and the meeting quickly moved through various topics of interest. They first went over Harry's memories and then testimony against Umbridge and answered any relevant questions that might be asked during the trial, and then went over the small bits of information they had on the former Hogwarts High Inquisitor from their own investigations. They also went over most of the juicy bits of information on Fudge provided by Harry and the goblins, which had all five people in the room grinning like Cheshire cats at what would happen to the oblivious Minister at this Friday's trial.

Both Thicknese and Scrimgeuer had their own bones to pick with Fudge and Umbridge, and were helpful and excited to be involved in the case they knew would bring them down for good. Scrimgeuer had years of gathered evidence of Fudge's interference in the DMLE, and had gathered a lot of follow up information on the many leads that Harry and the goblins gave them to work with. Thicknese too had been going over all the gathered intelligence and was ready to deliver the political blows he knew his information would create. The meeting ran a little long, but Harry and Tonks were able to leave in time to get to his martial arts and weapons classes on time.

Upon returning to Grimmauld Place that evening, the pair immediately knew that something bad had happened while they were gone due to the very somber mood and long faces they encountered when they arrived. They didn't have to wait too long however, as only minutes after entering the kitchen for dinner, Albus, Mad-Eye, and Kingsley returned with equally somber expressions. Everyone turned to the Headmaster and leader of the Light awaiting the news or in Harry and Tonks' case learning what happened.

"I am sorry to say, that Mudungus Fletcher's dead body was found in the back streets of Knockturn Alley with the Dark Mark hanging above him," announced the old wizard sadly causing several people to break out in sobs despite Dung's lack of popularity.

"Can I talk to you privately sir? It will just take a few minutes," asked Harry softly, not wanting to seem insensitive for the recently deceased but curious about what Order members had in the way of protection and escape methods, and not knowing when his next chance to talk to the Headmaster would be.

Dumbledore nodded and then led Harry to the sitting room, where he put up a silencing charm to keep the meeting private until he knew what the young teenager was up to. Harry wasted no time on pleasantries or condolences, and asked, if any, what port-keys or communication devices the Order members carry. At Albus' sad shake of his head, Harry just launched into telling him about his mother's communication charm and how close he was to solving the problem. He also mentioned the port-key given to the Longbottoms for his birthday that allowed them to escape their Manor. He

suggested port-key pendant necklaces for all Order members to wear, and also having emergency port-keys in every Order member and muggleborn or halfblood's house.

Professor Dumbledore sat quietly through his young students rambling, but letting his prominent twinkle return to his clear blue eyes. When Harry had exhausted all of his reasoning's, Dumbledore was pleasantly surprised and agreed whole heartily with the younger wizard. They discussed using the money Sirius left to the Order and Harry himself to split the bill for all the port-keys while Dumbledore would start on the pendant necklaces, and Harry would try to complete the communication devices, or they would have to buy and start charming several two-way mirrors.

"I do hope you succeed with the earring communication charm Harry," started Albus with a happy smile, "I've always wondered what I'd look like with one of those cool fang earrings Bill always wears."

"Me too sir," answered Harry with a similar reminiscent smile as he imagined him and his Headmaster with matching dragon fang earrings along with the rest of the Order.

Albus left shortly after to begin his parts of the plans, and Harry remained in the sitting room thinking about the two parts of the communication charm and why they wouldn't work together. That's when he realized that he didn't need to combine the charms, since the dragon fang earrings could have two magical parts, the fang and the hoop. He would connect the receiving charm to the loop or stud that goes into the ear allowing only the wearer to hear the communication, while the fang or stone or whatever could hold the magic, would get the transmitting charm and act as a small microphone easily picking up the voices spoken around it.

Now he just had to check over his notes and make sure he had everything for also synching the earrings to each other and assigning it to the appropriate person, as well as the piercing charm so everyone could wear them easily. He ignored everyone else when they finished with dinner and started playing games in the sitting room, and by ten o'clock felt he was ready to start experimenting on actual earrings. He asked the girls if they had any old earrings he

could use as well as earrings they would want him to use for their own communication devices.

Tonks ended up supplying him with over a dozen very useful loop earrings with various items attached in pairs. They included two pair of dragon fangs like Bill's, vampire fangs, moonstones, emeralds, snidget wings, and owl feathers and she was happy to let them all be used by someone if they liked them, except for the emerald pair which she claimed for herself. Hermione chose the moonstones, while Ginny chose the snidget wings, and the twins each wanted a vampire fang. Harry pulled out the miniature galaxy earrings he had bought for Luna to use for her, before he and Ron each selected a dragon fang like Bill's. Neville had borrowed a plain silver hoop, and retreated upstairs for a good while until he returned with a rare plant seed that he had somehow attached to the silver hoop.

By the time everyone began heading to bed or back to their apartment for the twins, Harry had successfully cast all the spells on the two owl feather earrings nobody selected that he had used as testers. He took everyone's earrings upstairs to continue with later, and talked to Tonks about going out tomorrow to buy several more pairs of earrings for Order and DA members when they were getting ready for bed. They talked for a while about plans for their last few days of summer together, and spent even more time rolling around naked under the sheets enjoying everything the summer had already brought them.

Tuesday morning for Harry started like most August mornings at Grimmauld Place, naked in bed with his wife. It was still hard for him to even comprehend what that really meant ...his wife. He was married at sixteen to the most remarkable woman he even met or knew, and was certain his life would be forever different from now on. He had someone with whom he shared everything, his life, his heart, and his fears and never had to worry about being alone ever again. He wouldn't ever be alone if he could help it, and that meant that he simply had to survive, there was no option that didn't include living to old age with his wife. With a renewed energy and determination, he gently hugged his precious wife's sleeping body next to him for several wonderful moments before letting himself get out of bed to begin his morning exercises.

He was quickly dressed and meeting his four friends downstairs before heading to the park to stretch and run. Both Ron and Neville seemed to be greatly enjoying the runs now that Seamus' laziness and complaining didn't hold them back or Dean's boastfulness and teasing put them down. Due to their better attitudes and slowly increasing fitness, they were able to go further than the group ever had together before returning to the park for some overdue stretching and cool down exercises. They shared a large and hearty breakfast and got several odd looks from the adults based on their increased overall food consumption, but Winky never batted an eye or left a plate empty for long.

They had morning DA practice only today, so Harry and Tonks could go purchase more earrings for Harry's work on the communication charm, and after promising Molly to be extra careful left immediately after lunch. The pair disguised themselves after apparating into a deserted alleyway near the Leaky Cauldron and passed unnoticed through the pub and gateway into Diagon Alley. They ended up buying over sixty pairs of earrings, twenty with gems and stones for the women, and forty pairs of various fangs for the men, although most of them were dragon fangs. They spent over two hours and 1200 galleons in three different jewelry shops of the magical shopping district, and had an absolute blast spending the day together unrecognized.

Harry's martial arts class and weapons training both passed uneventfully, and the couple was soon returning to Grimmauld Place in time for a relaxing dinner. Afterwards, Harry set to work charming the many pairs of earrings with the receiving and transmitting charms, the piercing and external linking charms, as well as a blood activation charm that was set when the earring initially pierces the user's ear synching the earring to them and making it impossible to be used by anyone else. He set them all up to activate to the wearer's first name or nickname if they preferred and everyone agreed, since Ginny would not allow anyone to use Ginerva, nor would Tonks be happy with everyone calling her Nymphadora. He also set up groups to call, like all DA members, all Order members, Inner Circle members, or all Weasleys just to name a few in case multiple people needed to be alerted at once.

Harry set aside all the pairs for the Order members in a separate box since he hadn't got to them yet, and close to midnight, had the finished products to give out to his friends. They had all been watching at some point during all of his charm work, and they all knew how they worked and what they did. They each tried them on, and began going to different rooms in the large brownstone to test them and their effectiveness. After fifteen minutes it was clear that they worked great, and everyone, especially the twins was amazed at how much they could use these. Everyone thanked Harry and said their goodnights, and he packed up all his things and went upstairs to bed and talked to Tonks about what the Order would think of the communication devices at tomorrow's weekly meeting.

When they got to the bedroom, Tonks went to get ready for bed while Harry put up his things and stripped to his boxers. When he was done, he turned around to be met by a smiling Tonks who had been watching him undress while wearing one of the skimpiest outfits Harry had ever seen on a person. His eyes almost bulged out of his head at the incredible sight, and it didn't take much convincing to get the teenager ready and into bed, the communication earrings completely forgotten about as he enjoyed one of the most pleasurable aspects of their growing relationship again and again.

Wednesday began with the normal morning run and DA exercises before lunch and private dueling time after lunch so Harry could work on the Order's communication earrings. It was almost four o'clock when Harry finally finished with enough for all current Order members and a few extras, and he and Tonks had to rush quickly to get to his martial arts class on time. It seemed like in no time however, the pair was back at headquarters eating dinner as more and more Order members began arriving for the weekly meeting.

It didn't take long for the younger kids to be shepherded out of the kitchen so the adults could have their meeting, and Tonks gave Harry a wink in reminder that she would be trying to bring up the earrings as soon as she could. The group of kids headed to the sitting room and gathered around the fire to talk about how well the earrings were working and if they had any problems. The twins apparently in an effort to test them, had gone to many of the usual places in the

magical districts of England to make sure they worked everywhere, and had nothing but success stories.

“I also wanted to have these in place before we go back to Hogwarts, so we can keep in touch with our graduating DA members and alliances outside of school,” announced Harry, “but until the war is over, the full understanding and charms work on these earrings will remain my secret. I let you watch me make them, but have told nobody how to duplicate what I have done, maybe when the war is over, we’ll get Weasley’s Wizarding Wheezes to market and produce them.”

“Wicked!” agreed the twins in unison.

“That reminds me, I found you two t-shirts I think you’ll love ...hold on one second,” continued Harry before taking off upstairs and returning with the ‘www’ shirts he found for them in muggle London.

“These are brilliant,” they echoed. “Where did you find them?”

“Muggle London,” Harry answered with a lopsided grin.

“What?” the twins along with Ron, Ginny, and Neville all asked in confusion.

“I’ll let Hermione explain it later,” continued Harry, “but first, I wanted to talk to everyone about helping turn the DA into something we can be proud of. I don’t think the adults are ever going to truly respect us or even let us join the Order since they still refuse the twins.”

“But most of them just see the twins as jokesters,” replied Hermione knowingly.

“Regardless of who they are, they own a business on Diagon Alley,” continued Harry sincerely. “That’s instant access to the Alley, and eyes and ears to the wizarding shopping center. They are fools to not accept the twins for that alone, not to mention they are bloody geniuses when it comes to pranks.”



“Thanks Harry,” the twins responded sincerely as everyone else nodded thoughtfully at Harry’s points.

“Plus, some of their pranks already have uses in fighting Death Eaters, and I bet we could develop a couple more,” encouraged Harry hoping everyone understood where he was going with this.

“Pranks for battling Death Eaters?” whispered George in awe as he and his twin brother shared knowing smiles that promised mischief.

“A portable swamp could easily be dumped on a group of wizards or trolls, or that new blackness powder you talked about, or even your color canisters could probably be refined to distribute more than just color, or if you could incorporate canary creams to activate on contact we could have a whole line of prank warfare to help fight Death Eaters,” spoke Harry convincingly to his assembled group of six friends. “You four fought at the Department of Mysteries, you know we could have used anything that would help. They are not going to stop until every one of us and those we love are dead, I don’t say this to scare you, but that is the reality, we are at war and anything we can use, we should.”

“Here here, Harry,” chorused the twins and Neville honestly.

“Your right Harry,” answered Hermione seriously to the shocked faces of everyone else, who she just smirked at, “what, I see the value in your pranks ...I just don’t like you testing them on unsuspecting first years.”

“I love you Hermione,” spoke Ron in obvious la-la land as his glazed over eyes only saw his new girlfriend of three weeks, forgetting who was around them at that moment.

The frozen but rapidly blushing face of Hermione and Ron said it all, and soon the twins, Ginny, Neville, and Harry were laughing hysterically at the couple that was quickly becoming a pair of ripe red tomatoes. Ron’s combination of total shock at what he said, who he said it to, and who else witnessed the event was enough to leave the group laughing uproariously for several minutes as the young couple slowly tried to regain their composure, natural skin color, and dignity.

Before the twins or Ginny ever stopped laughing, Hermione gave Ron a crushing hug and deep kiss and returned her love for the stuttering red faced boy, whose smile and even brighter face said it all to the others.

“Sorry to break this up guys, but Tonks is calling me in to the Order meeting ...accept Tonks ...okay, end call,” spoke Harry quickly, and getting everyone to regain themselves. “Fred, George can you go to the locations we talked about ...they’re probably not going to believe me and will want to test them extensively.”

“Yes sir,” answered the twins in unison while giving mock salutes to their younger friend, business partner, and leader.

//////////Break//////////

“If there are no more reports,” added a twinkling eyed Albus Dumbledore from the head of the large kitchen table as he surveyed the many Order members around him closely, “we will be hearing from Mr. Potter about a new device Tonks tells me is ready ...could you let him know we are ready for him?”

“Sure thing sure,” answered the spiky pink haired metamorph with a smirk to those around her “call Harry ...Harry, they’re ready for you ...end call.”

“What are you doing Tonks?” asked Molly critically as she eyed the young witch like she lost her mind or was talking to voices inside her head.

“You wanted me to get Harry,” she answered with a smirk.

“And here I am,” answered the newly arrived Harry from the door, “thank you Tonks.”

“I see you have figured it out Harry, I am most interested in hearing what you have to say ...the floor is yours,” spoke Albus with a wide smile and twinkling eyes.

Harry again ignored the many glares he received the moment he announced his presence at the door, but none worse than the Potion Master's, and he had to give a slight smirk in his direction before glancing around the rest of the gathered meeting's attendees. He set down his box and enlarged it so that all the earrings could be seen by everyone sitting at the table, and some even came closer to his end to see better. Harry enjoyed the confused looks on most people's faces and was just getting ready to begin his explanation when an unsurprisingly bitter voice rang out.

"I don't see how presents for Potter's admirers are going to help us," snapped Severus Snape critically and with his patented glare he reserved only for Potters on his face.

"I would hardly consider you to be one of my admirer's professor," responded Harry with a little cheek, "but if you'd like to submit an application to Gryffindor tower, you will be considered."

"Why you --," started Snape angrily as he made to stand.

"Severus ...Harry ...that is enough," spoke Dumbledore authoritatively, causing the two people in question to drop their verbal sparring immediately. "Harry, please continue."

"Thank you sir," started Harry after another deep calming breath to calm him. "This is actually what my mother was working on before she died," he continued, causing all noise in the kitchen to stop immediately as every body's attention was instantly grabbed.

"These earrings," continued Harry without much pause, "are two way communication devices that are all connected to one another, are voice activated, and can be individually linked to each of you. The metal stud or hoop depending on the earring has the receiving charm and is close enough to your ear that only you will hear it. The fangs or gems acts as the transmitter and has the ability to pick up all noise around the device. They have built in piercing charms with a built in blood identification so only you can use them once they are on. They are further voice activated, and a simple 'call Albus' will open a two way communication link between you and the Headmaster, to which he will have to say 'accept call' or 'deny call' if he too busy to answer

or he can say 'open call' and the conversation will be opened to everyone in the Order. If someone is willing to demonstrate I've sent Fred and George to two different locations for you to test them."

"Does it work similar to James' and Sirius' mirrors?" asked a thoughtful and tired looking Remus Lupin.

"Yes they do, only you can't see who you're talking with," answered Harry with a smile, "and thank you for volunteering Remus."

"B ...but ...I ...," stuttered Remus dumbly.

"Oh, don't be such a baby Remus ...it doesn't hurt, just pick an earring that you like and I'll do the rest," continued Harry with a slight chuckle at Remus' hesitancy.

Remus, not surprisingly selected one of two werewolf fangs that he felt was appropriate, and handed it to Harry. Ignoring everyone's renewed curiosity, Harry set the final spell linking the earring to the name Remus, and watched as it glowed a bright purple for a short moment before handing it over to the now even more nervous werewolf. Seeing his apprehension and confusion, Harry explained to everyone that once the name was set and the earring put on, only that person could control it or remove it, and it could be hidden with a disillusionment charm or even localized invisibility spells or glamour charms.

"Well, then here goes nothing," spoke Remus as he slowly brought the earring to his left ear where to his surprise, it magically pierced his ear without even a little pain, just as Harry said.

"Now just say 'call Fred' or 'call George,' and you're good to go," spoke Harry confidently.

"Okay ...call Fred," spoke Remus out loud and waited for only a split second before a familiar voice clearly rang out like it was right next to his ear.

'Is that you Professor Lupin?' asked Fred's voice in Remus' ear only.

“Hello Fred ...yes it’s me, but I think I’ve told you before that I’m no longer your Professor,” spoke Remus outwardly so that the Order members could tell he was having a conversation despite none of them being able to hear Fred themselves.

‘Yes sir ...let Peeves say hello,’ spoke Fred before another familiar voice echoed through the communication device.

‘Does the Weasley twin want to have another prank war?’ cackled the poltergeist’s familiar voice in the background easy enough for Remus to hear.

‘Call George next, I think he’s in Diagon Alley ...bye Remus, just remember to say ‘end call’ before calling George,’ finished Fred.

“End call,” spoke Remus easily, “call George.”

‘Professor Lupin, is that you?’ asked George.

“Yes George, Harry suckered me into testing these earring devices,” continued Remus with a friendly glare to the smiling teenager, “and please just call me Remus.”

‘Sure thing Remus, oh wait I think my ice cream’s ready,’ spoke George happily before another voice came through the link.

‘Mr. Weasley, it’s a little late for you isn’t it? You’re usually here first thing in the morning for your ice cream?’ came the unmistakable voice of Florian Fortesque.

‘Oh, I’ll be back in the morning, don’t you worry,’ replied Fred to the ice cream proprietor so that Remus could hear as well, ‘thanks Florian.’ ‘And I’m sure I’ll see you later Remus, tell Harry these babies are the best.’

“I will George, thanks ...end call,” replied Remus with an amused smile on his face before turning to Harry. “George said to tell you these babies are the best ...and I have to agree with him. I could hear almost everything going on around them, the other people if they were in a conversation. George was at Florian Fortesque’s getting ice

cream, and Fred was in Hogwarts plotting with Peeves about something ...oh wait, how do I receive a call, I think it's buzzing"

"Jus say 'accept call'," answered Harry.

"Accept call," spoke Remus clearly.

'Hey Remus, just wanted to make sure you tested the receiving end too, the buzzing in your ear is probably my favorite part. Well, I'm walking back to Hogwarts gates to go home I'll see you tomorrow Remus' spoke Fred happily.

"Thanks Fred ...end call," replied Remus with a shake of his head. "When you have a call, the earring buzzes, Fred just wanted to make sure I got a full test and tell me he's walking back to Hogwarts' gates and going home.

"So, it works in Hogwarts you say?" asked Albus with a very impressed tone before turning and smiling to the young wizard standing before them. "I must say I am quite impressed Mr. Potter ...and you say you have enough for everyone here?"

"Yes sir, if everyone wants to just come up and pick out a pair I'll set them to your desired name and be out of your way," answered Harry easily.

Almost at once, Harry was surrounded by Order members asking questions about the various charms used and the earrings in general. When someone picked an earring or pair, they handed them to Harry, and once he was sure he had their names correct, he linked the earring to them. It took over a half-hour until only Bill, Mad-Eye, and Dumbledore were left, each content to let the others go before them. Bill asked if Harry could link his own dragon fang earring after Albus and Moody each selected matching dragon fangs to most of the other men.

Everyone seemed very interested in watching Harry perform the full set of charms onto Bill's earring, especially Professor Flitwick who watched the entire exchange with a growing sense of joy. Harry had done so many earrings by now, that it only took ten minutes to silently

put all the necessary charms on Bill's dragon fang earring and hoop and gladly handed back the lucky earring to the older curse breaker who had worn it over four years. Professor Flitwick asked Harry to come see him after school started, and that he would love to work on advanced charms with him this year. Harry eagerly accepted, and promised the Order he had at least another twenty pairs if they were interested in growing, but could always make more as they witnessed with Bill's.

Everyone seemed quite impressed with the earcoms as Mad-Eye called them, and even Snape had nothing to say about the devices since he was probably the one who would benefit the most from them in his role as spy to Voldemort. Dumbledore thanked Harry, and also passed out phoenix pendants to everyone in attendance that were permanent port-keys that brought you to headquarters with a tap of your wand and the phrase 'phoenix flash' and explained where the funds and ideas came from to Harry's growing embarrassment. He also explained the emergency port-keys for every Order member's house-hold that they would be getting next week and his plans to provide more invisibility and battle cloaks to the members in the fields in the weeks to come. Harry recommended Armand's Armory, and quickly displayed his own vest and pants he just so happened to be wearing, before bidding everyone a good night and leaving them to conclude their weekly Order meeting without him.

AN: Almost done, the last two chapters will probably come out real soon if not already posted. I'll also be putting out my other stories probably the moment I finish posting the last chapter of this one. Several of them have already been started, and have waited too long to get their chance! Thanks!

## Chapter 19

Harry woke up Friday morning the day of the Fudge and Umbridge trials at the normal early morning hour, and in the usual tangle of naked limbs and twisted sheets. He would never get over how much he enjoyed Tonks' company in every aspect of his life, and especially his bed. He was a little nervous about today's upcoming trials, but was fairly confident that both Fudge and Umbridge should be out of office by lunchtime. He just wasn't too comfortable having such an important role in the proceedings, his testimony and the evidence he gave would put him in the center of the trial, and while he hoped to use the influence of his celebrity today, it wasn't something he was really comfortable with.

If putting his name out there to help the political climate which would in turn help the wizarding world was the only way to go, then he had to actively try to affect positive change. Today would go a long way in shaping the Ministry against Voldemort and his Death Eaters, and hopefully start to turn around the backwards politics and corrupt system in place. He slowly got out of bed and got ready and went for his run with his friends, before returning to take a shower and get dressed in his nicest robes for the day at the Ministry. After a rushed breakfast, the very large group was gathered around the Floo and heading to the Leaky Cauldron first before continuing on to the Ministry's Atrium.

The large group arrived in the atrium among thick crowds of gathered witches and wizards all excited about today's proceedings and what they could mean. Everyone in their group was on the court list as either guests or in Harry's case as a witness and was able to get through security without any hassles. It was a rather quiet and uneventful ride in the lift down to Courtroom ten where they split from Harry to find their seats as he made his way to the witness section where Tobias Thicknese and Rufus Scrimgeour were already sitting and having a whispered conversation.

"Hello gentlemen," greeted Harry as he neared the two older wizards, who both looked up and smiled genuinely at the raven haired teenager.



“Ah ...Harry, you’re here ...it’s good to see you,” spoke Tobias evenly while Rufus only nodded in greeting.

“It’s good to see you both too,” answered Harry as he pulled out a chair next to Tobias and took his seat.

“Are you ready to take down the government?” whispered Tobias quietly next to him with a wicked smirk on his face.

“I can’t wait,” answered the equally smirking Harry.

“You won’t have to wait long,” started Tobias, “and I hope you’re ready, because I think I’ll have you start against Umbridge since your testimony is the most damaging.”

“Sounds good to me,” replied Harry happily, “I’ve been waiting for this day since I first met that toad.”

“You’re a good man Harry,” laughed Rufus loudly, greatly anticipating the destruction of the two obnoxious politicians, and in good spirits already due to the anticipation and excited gleam in his grey eyes.

A few moments later, Fudge and Umbridge strutted into the courtroom like they owned it, without any clue about what was going to happen to them. They spoke loudly about how confident they were, and how much those who opposed them would suffer once they were cleared of any ridiculous charges that could be brought against them. Harry and the two men next to him shared knowing smirks after hearing the two soon to be blindsided politicians spout off about the uselessness of any case brought against them, and sat eagerly waiting their role in the politicians’ down fall.

At ten o’clock sharp, the seventy plus members of the Wizengamot began filtering into their seats from the ante-chamber behind the stands. Along with the Wizengamot, the Heads of every Ministry Department, an extra twelve people including a very surprised Arthur Weasley were given seats among the court’s ruling body. The significance of their presence did not go unnoticed by anyone, including a now all of a sudden very nervous current Minister of Magic.

"What's going on? Why are my Department Heads present?" asked the now sweating and wide eyed Minister from his seat not too far from Harry and his small team sat watching in glee.

"You will get your opportunity to ask questions soon, Minister," drawled a bored sounding Madam Bones from her seat of prominence, seemingly greatly enjoying herself as she watched Cornelius Fudge swell with indignation. "But first ...The Wizengamot convenes on this the 25th of August, 1996 to hear case 23656, the Department of Magical Law Enforcement against Delores Jane Umbridge, who will be represented by?"

"Minister Cornelius Fudge," blurted out the irate Minister of Magic from his seat next to his up to this point, a quiet Undersecretary, and furiously writing Percy Weasley pompously acting in his usual capacity as Fudge's personal assistant and whipping boy.

"Very well, Minister," continued Madam Amelia Bones sweetly, "The charges against Delores Umbridge are as follows, possession of an illegal dark artifact, multiple counts of torture with said artifact, two counts of attempted murder, illegal use of Ministry dementors, and the endangerment of children."

Total chaos and pandemonium, was the only way to accurately depict the scene that occurred at the conclusion of Madam Bones' declaration of charges. Harry sat back and smiled at the look on Fudge's and Umbridge's faces, ones of total shock and bewilderment, matching many of the faces viewing the proceedings. He saw the amusement in the eyes of both Rufus and Tobias, who were both thinking along the same lines as him.

"This case is being prosecuted by the Auror Department represented by Head Auror, Rufus William Scrimgeour and the Department of Magical Law Enforcement represented by Tobias Tertullian Thicknese, Head Solicitor. The judges for today's proceedings are myself, Amelia Bones, Albus Wulferic Dumbledore, and Basil Antonio Zabini," continued Madam Bones over the noise at first which quickly quieted so as not to miss a thing. "Solicitor Thicknese, please present your case ..."

“Thank Madam Bones, ladies and gentlemen of the Wizengamot,” started Tobias with practiced ease as he stood and addressed the now eagerly waiting masses by making his way to the center of the floor to be heard by all. “It is my intention to prove to all of you here, that Delores Jane Umbridge is in fact guilty of the numerous crimes listed today. She is in possession of a dark arts artifact known as a ‘blood quill’ which we have sworn statements from seven students who state that the artifact was used on them during detentions served, including my first witness. My witness will also testify that Ms. Umbridge admitted to sending two dementors after he and his cousin this past summer, in an attempt to murder and silence him, and then used her authority to attempt to frame him for her own crimes, one Mr. Harry Potter.”

If Harry thought the courtroom was crazy before, it was nothing compared to what was happening now. Many people were yelling and shouting obscenities, sobbing openly, crying for justice, or simply staring dumbstruck to their seats as chaos reigned. Madam Bones had to use several explosion hexes to get everyone’s attention and to settle down both the unruly crowds and the very angry Wizengamot members, threatening everyone’s removal if they couldn’t control themselves. She then nodded to the prosecution to continue

“The prosecution calls Harry James Potter-Black, Head of House Potter and House Black to the stand,” continued Tobias grandly, and ignoring the growing whispers and muttering at the announcement of Harry’s new status as his client sat in a chair provided for him to one side, but still in perfect view of the Wizengamot members. “Mr. Potter has already provided the court with several Pensieve memories we have had authenticated and verified as truth, we will follow with questions at their conclusion.”

While Tobias began his remarks, an Auror brought out the same Pensieve Harry had used in Amelia’s office weeks ago, still filled with the silvery substance of his memories. The Pensieve was set on a table a few feet in front of Harry, and then activated with a tap of the Auror’s wand. The image rose out of the stone bowl larger than Harry had ever seen, but allowed for the larger group to view the memory at the same time.

"I object to this!" shouted Fudge loudly, causing the Auror to tap his wand against the Pensieve pausing it as the Minister made his way towards the center of the room and Harry and the Pensieve. "I challenge his status as an adult witness."

"Sorry to burst your bubble Minister," started Harry calmly and with a knowing smile on his face as he lifted his right hand and revealed two Family Rings that signified a Head of Family, and couldn't be faked, "but I am an adult now."

"W ...wh ...b-but," stuttered Fudge crestfallen after his only means of stopping this case came crashing down.

"Please continue Auror Walsh," spoke Madam Bones importantly, and with only the slightest hint of amusement in her eyes.

Minister Fudge could do nothing but watch as the Pensieve reactivated and the scene of Harry and his cousin Dudley being attacked by two dementors the previous summer was witnessed by all, beginning a short and effective string of memories. It was followed by a multitude of scene of Harry in defense class getting assigned detentions, and then to the detentions themselves and the writing of lines with her blood quill. The final scene was a bit longer, and contained her admission of sending the dementors, her contemplation of using the cruciatus curse, and the failed attempts at drugging him with veritaserum.

By the time the Pensieve scenes ended, Dumbledore and practically every member of the Wizengamot was glaring murderously at the former Hogwarts High Inquisitor. Fudge looked particularly peaky after witnessing the staggering evidence against his Undersecretary, and took several long moments to plan his strategy, still under the delusion that he could save his own career if he could distance himself from Umbridge.

"Mr. Potter," began Tobias intently, hoping to capitalize on the crowds sentiments, "how many times were you forced to do lines with Ms. Umbridge's blood quill?"

“Enough to have the words permanently scarred on the back of my hand,” answered Harry who lifted his hand to show off the words ‘I must not tell lies’ still carved on the back of it. “Overall, probably about a two dozen times.”

“One more question Mr. Potter,” began Tobias slowly, and allowing everyone to pay attention. “When was the first time you remember meeting Ms. Umbridge?”

“In this courtroom, a little over a year ago when she voted against me for defending myself against the dementors she sent after me,” answered Harry with a straight face, while his whole body wanted to scream out a triumphant shout for joy at the looks of outrage on the faces of the crowd and Wizengamot members.

“Thank you Mr. Potter,” replied Tobias pleasantly, “I have nothing further for this witness.”

“Minister Fudge,” started Madam Bones, “do you have any questions for the witness?”

Fudge clearly did not look happy, and his red face was filled with an intense look of concentration as he planned his best strategy to survive this. He had a short whispered conversation with Delores who seemed quite pale, but spent most of the time glaring hatefully at Harry as the memories played out. After their brief discussion, Minister Fudge got a smirk on his face hoping to salvage some of this as his Undersecretary coached him on what to say and focus on.

“Yes, I do,” started Fudge pompously as he swelled his chest and strode confidently to the center of the courtroom to be seen by all. “Have you been in contact with the murderer and Azkaban escaped convict Sirius Black in the last two years?”

“I object,” started Tobias quickly standing to Harry’s defense, “this has no relevance on today’s case.”

“I assure you it does,” replied Fudge loudly.

"It's alright, I don't mind answering," spoke Harry clearly with a glare directed at the Minister. "I have never met a murderer named Sirius Black."

"Liar," shouted Umbridge loudly.

"I have met," continued Harry over the bitch's interruption, "an escaped falsely accused prisoner of Azkaban named Sirius Black, the same night I met Peter Pettigrew and heard his confession of betraying me and my parents to Voldemort and framing my godfather Sirius for it. Something you would know if you, Minister hadn't sentenced him to Azkaban without a trial. It's actually much like how you unlawfully ordered the dementor's kiss on Barty Crouch Jr. last year to cover up the return of Voldemort before attacking me with your Undersecretary and through the Daily Prophet."

Again the reaction from the Wizengamot and populous was enormous as many started yelling and screaming their dissatisfaction. Fudge looked white as a ghost as Harry's words were heard by everyone within the courtroom, and he knew he would probably never get out of this as he sunk in his chair and remained near catatonic in silence as the case continued around him. He didn't even flinch as after Harry left the stand, Thicknese and Scrimgeur both skipped the rest of the witnesses against Umbridge and began turning over all the evidence they had against Fudge and his administration.

Most people were also shocked into silence as countless pieces of evidence surfaced, showing multiple infractions of embezzlement, bribery, extortion, theft, coercion, and even misappropriation of Ministry funds. Scrimgeur even listed several instances of Fudge and his administration interfering and tampering within the Department of Magical Law Enforcement over his entire stint in office. They connected several large bribes to judgments in the Wizengamot most notably the trials where Death Eaters walked free, and Ministry and department dealings itself, as well as the overstepping of the Hogwarts High Inquisitor, and the Minister unlawfully authorizing that power.

By the time Thicknese and Scrimgeur sat down presenting all their evidence, it was approaching noon and most were calling for the

Minister and his Undersecretary's heads. The Wizengamot did not even leave the courtroom to deliberate, finding them both guilty of countless crimes and quickly sentencing them both to life imprisonment in Azkaban and having the Aurors snap their wands and lead them away in heavy magical chains. The announcement of the Minister's guilt and sentencing brought about an uproar from the people and Wizengamot who demanded a new Minister be selected immediately. Dumbledore quickly refused as several called for him to take the job, and watched as Basil Zabini stood and nominated Madam Amelia Bones as a fair judge and law maker as the next Minister.

There was seemingly overwhelming support, and within minutes she was being named the new Minister and being sworn into office by Dumbledore as the Head of the Wizengamot. Her first order of business after naming Tobias Thicknese as her Undersecretary and Rufus Scrimgeour her replacement in the DMLE, was to make reparations to Harry Potter on behalf of the Ministry and Wizarding World, and awarded him a million galleons for his unwavering truth and for the crimes committed against him. It was almost one when the courtroom finally let out, most rushing to their homes and jobs to spread the word before the Daily Prophet reporters could get back to their offices to get a very important Evening Edition out.

After the courtroom started clearing out, Harry wished his law team good luck in their new jobs and met back up with his friends and everyone staying at Grimmauld Place that came to watch. Dumbledore allowed Harry to treat everyone to lunch this time at the Leaky Cauldron, and afterwards walk around Diagon Alley to finish up any shopping they had before school started in just under a week. Harry hung out with the group until quarter to four, when he and Tonks left to go to his martial arts and weapons class happy to have a few minutes alone to themselves.

In his jujitsu class, everyone knew he was going back to school and wanted to get in a good fight with the tough and speedy youngest student before he left keeping him busy throughout class. He loved every minute of it, since he could beat most of them now without great difficulty and everyone wanted to give him a good fight. In his weapons training he even managed to defeat Sensei Leung once,

catching him over exposed after a blocked lunge and helping to maintain his great mood. His Sensei congratulated him, and had him start several exercises he could do when alone and training this year at school or until he could find an opponent to train with.

By the time Harry and Tonks returned to Grimmauld Place, dinner had already begun and the table was even more crowded than usual with the arrival of Fred, George, Bill, Fleur, Professors McGonagall, Flitwick, and Dumbledore, as well as Moody and Shacklebolt. Harry greeted everyone warmly and got a cheer of welcome and appreciation from everyone present for his role in ousting Fudge and Umbridge. Everyone was happily waiving the Daily Prophet's Evening Edition proclaiming the downfall of Fudge's government at the hands of the Boy-Who-Lived, and he got to read the long article describing the trial and outcomes accurately. His meal went well, and after eating his fill he complimented Winky on another wonderful meal as he listened to the talk around the table.

"Harry," questioned Dumbledore curiously, and with maybe a little regret having finished his meal as well, "could we speak privately for a few moments?"

"Of course sir," answered Harry as he followed his Headmaster to the sitting and the seats near the fireplace where silencing charms were put up. "How do you like your new fang earrings?"

"They work splendidly," answered a smiling Albus despite the sadness Harry could clearly see in his peaceful blue eyes. "I found myself using them more every day. It's actually one of the reasons I wanted to talk with you."

"Okay sir," added Harry, unsure where his Headmaster was going with this and urging him to continue.

"First, I wanted to apologize to you Harry," started Albus sincerely as his sad eyes locked onto the younger wizards' bright green ones. "I had no idea what was going on in my school last year and for that ...and what you had to endure last year because of my actions, I am truly sorry ...you should not have had to deal with that alone, and I apologizing for not giving you the time last year you deserved."



"It's alright sir, it's in the past," answered Harry honestly, and somewhat grateful for the Headmaster's admission and apologies.

"No Harry ...it's not alright. I should have paid closer attention to everything and especially to you, I have been slipping far too often these days and I can only beg for your understanding and forgiveness since a great many of my failings have concerned you," responded the very elderly looking sad wizard.

"I forgive you sir, and I don't blame you, you are only human after all," responded Harry sincerely.

"You are an extraordinary man, Harry," continued Albus with a bright smile and renewed twinkle in his eyes and spirit. "I am very proud of you, if there is ever anything you need ...please come to me."

"Thank you sir," responded an equally smiling and pleased teenager who felt like he was finally being taken seriously and working through the past.

"The other reason I wanted to talk with you, was about your upcoming schedule for sixth year," continued the elderly wizard excitedly. "Professor Flitwick is most impressed by your earrings, and has expressed his desire to take you on as his apprentice in both Charms and Dueling, and I wanted your thoughts on the matter."

"That sounds brilliant," answered Harry excitedly, thinking about his mother being given the same opportunity in her final two years of Hogwarts as well.

"Wonderful, then you will have lessons with me while your classmates are in Charms, and study with Filius in your spare time. The three of us will also have to talk about scheduling your Charms NEWT after we get back to school so you might want to prepare a little," continued Albus, equally as excited as the teenager in front of him. "I have also been told that Professor Tonks has asked to have you as her assistant and I have agreed, although I would like to keep both of your new titles a secret until the start of term feast."

“Okay sir,” replied Harry, slightly nervous about where this conversation was going from here.

“That brings up my last point I need to talk to you about,” spoke the Headmaster seriously, and Harry now knew that Albus was aware of the relationship between him and Tonks and was about to chew him out.

“And that is?” asked Harry much more calmly than he felt, knowing there was no way he would give up any part of Tonks.

“I trust that now ...as an adult, you will act with discretion and decency and keep both your personal life and Professor Tonks’ just that ...personal,” added Albus with twinkling eyes but still a serious look that Harry interpreted as him knowing about he and Tonks’ relationship already, and warning him not to let the school find out and it would be okay with him.

“Yes sir,” mumbled Harry with an emotional look at the Headmaster, will inside he was celebrating crossing another perceived hurdle.

“I am curious though,” continued Albus with a bright twinkle, “about your beliefs on love’s power now?”

“What?” asked Harry dumbly, not sure he understood the question.

“It took me a few days to put it all together after the battle at the Burrow,” continued the smiling Headmaster, glad to be confirming his theory of the last few weeks and happy to tell someone, really the only person he would ever tell. “You saved her out of love, and in that hospital bed, her love brought your magic back. Plus, never have I seen either of you as genuinely happy and at peace as you have been these last few weeks you’ve spent together, and would never want to deny you that love and joy ...you more than anyone I know deserve.”

“Thank you sir,” responded Harry sincerely before doing something he never thought he would, and plunged forward and grabbed Albus in a strong hug feeling his emotions slipping slightly and overwhelming him in their intensity.

Albus was figuratively and literally shocked at what just happened on so many levels. First, was Harry's initiation of hugging and thanking him, and then the slight tears he could feel coming from a young man who hadn't even cried after killing his teacher at the age of eleven, a basilisk at twelve, or facing Tom all those times. Finally, was the electric shock like feeling of love that permeated through Harry's being as he held him like the grandson he always considered him to be. Albus was again reminded about what a truly remarkable man Harry Potter was and had been for a long time as he calmly held the emotionally recovering young wizard waiting for him to get whatever he needed out at his own pace.

"You are welcome, my boy," replied Albus softly before Harry finally ended the embrace and gave his Headmaster a watery smile.

"You're right about love's power sir," responded Harry after whipping at his eyes with his shirt and still smiling at his Headmaster.

"I hoped you might understand one day Harry," replied Albus kindly as he returned the smile and rested his hand on the younger wizard's shoulder affectionately. "I will see you at Hogwarts soon."

"Okay, bye sir," spoke Harry relieved to have his relationship with Tonks accepted by the adults whose opinions he cares the most about, now that both Remus and Albus have basically given their blessings.

That weekend at Grimmauld Place passed quickly as Hermione encouraged everyone to read up and begin preparing for their upcoming sixth year. Harry gave them all time off of training so they could all study or relax in the final week before school, while he used the time to train with Tonks alone. They spend most of their days in the basement training chamber dueling and snogging and spending some alone time together before having to go back to school. Married life didn't seem much different from the entire summer since they had spent that whole time together anyway, it hadn't changed much day to day but rather provided them with a sense of future stability they both longed for and greatly enjoyed.

The only real annoyances of the weekend, where the morning Daily Prophet articles about the Wizarding World's favorite hero, and praising him as the voice of truth. They completely put everything the new Ministry was implementing and changing into the back pages with small articles as they focused on sensationalizing the Boy-Who-Lived and all his heroic efforts over the years. Harry was getting quite sick of all the attention and publicity, and by Monday morning if the Prophet wasn't bad enough, Witch Weekly ran their most eligible bachelor list featuring the one and only Harry Potter in the top spot and on the magazine's cover.

Harry was a little pissed at just about everyone, since they all started teasing him about it, while he just wanted to scream out to the world that he was no longer a bachelor but couldn't do that to Tonks despite her wanting the same. They both knew it would not go over well if word got out that Harry was married to his DADA teacher, even if he was an adult and promised Tonks they would just try to ignore it. It also worked better to not have Voldemort know about Tonks either, although she was still in danger as an Order member, former Auror, and now a Hogwarts teacher they didn't want to add to it.

Harry excused himself a little early from the sitting room Monday night because he still had a few arrangements to make for tomorrow and wanted everything to be perfect. It luckily didn't take long to get the room ready thanks to magic, and just as midnight was approaching he heard Tonks climbing the stairs to bed. He dimmed the lights just before she opened the door making it seem he was asleep already and watched as Tonks quietly entered their room, closed the door, and recast the locking and silencing charms on them as the sound of the clock chiming midnight in the hall faded before turning back to the bedroom and freezing at the sight.

"Happy Birthday Dora," spoke Harry affectionately and with a wide and happy smile from his spot in the doorway to the bedroom.

"Oh Harry," she cried softly before launching herself across the room and jumping into his waiting arms and sending them both staggering backwards into the master bedroom filled with flowers and candles. "This is so beautiful, thank you."

“Anything for my wonderful wife,” whispered Harry in her ear as he hugged her from behind and enjoyed watching her take in every aspect of the decorated room happily.

“I love you Harry,” she squealed happily and spun to kiss him eagerly all the while pushing him slowly towards the king bed they shared.

“I love you Dora,” he replied hungrily as he continued to let his wife set whatever pace she wanted on her special day, “and happy birthday.”

The young couple hardly slept at all throughout the night as they celebrated Tonks’ 23rd birthday in each others arms, happy to spend one of their last nights together in Grimmauld Place before Tonks had to report to Hogwarts. Early in the morning, Harry gave Tonks her present, a beautiful gold necklace with a pink amethyst surrounded by smaller flower petal-like emeralds which she absolutely adored. Harry skipped out on the morning run to spend the entire morning with his wife, lying comfortably in bed cuddling and making love, taking a bath together, and simply enjoying every possible second they could before having to finally make appearances at breakfast.

Their appearances at breakfast were staggered so they didn’t look like they were together, although Remus gave Harry a knowing look and sniff of the air that confirmed that at least one other person at the table knew what was going on. Tonks told the group she was planning to spend the day at her parents and would be back to take Harry to his martial arts lesson, when she was really going home to finish packing and saying goodbye to her parents, not yet ready to tell her parents about Harry or being married or able to tell the others she was packing to leave for Hogwarts. After breakfast Tonks left, and Remus asked to join the group of kids going down to the training chamber to see how they had been progressing.

To say Remus was impressed was a complete and utter understatement, since Harry had his four friends at a level above the average Hogwarts graduate somewhere near Auror training level. They fought well individually or in teams of two which they were usually grouped in as Harry ran them through drills and scenarios without breaking a sweat himself. These kids were probably better

than most Order members, and knew how to work well in groups something they took full advantage of in practice. They wanted to test their shields, and asked Remus to help as an additional attacker. They explained what they did, and everyone took their turn holding their shield under the onslaught for as long as they could.

Remus was amazed as Neville withstood all five attackers for almost a minute, since everyone else was finished almost as soon as the fifth attacker was added to the others. Remus thought he could probably do about what Neville did, and was then surprised when Harry wanted to be started off with five from the beginning to save time. None of the others thought anything strange about this, so Remus complied, and discovered why after ten straight minutes and no signs of Harry's shield collapsing in sight. The group gave up after another ten minutes of getting nowhere and congratulated Harry for outlasting them again as Remus only stared at the young wizard in amazement.

"You're going to catch flies looking like that Remus," laughed Harry to his one time Professor and now friend.

"Sorry," replied Remus closing his mouth, but not taking his amber eyes off Harry, "That was quite impressive Harry, I don't know many who could do that."

"Thanks Remus," responded Harry nonchalantly, "it's really more about focus than the actual shielding for me. Most Death Eaters won't hesitate to throw unforgivables, and no matter how strong the shield, it won't stop them. I like it because it tires everyone out magically allowing them to continually push and expand their core's limits."

"That's quite the theory there Harry," responded Remus while thinking intently about what Harry just said and wondering if all of Harry's proof on the theory was from his own magical drains over his life that have allowed his magical core to get stronger than most his age.

"The proof is in the numbers old Moony," responded Harry with a happy smile. "Hermione, go get the record charts."

Remus was astounded as he looked at the recording times of every score from every time they did the shielding drill from the start of their training three weeks ago. They had all doubled what they had started at if not more, and Remus began to think that Harry really had something to this. They also explained other growths over the three weeks that would contribute also to their rising scores and performance, but they were mostly the physical condition Harry had them do and the dueling and lessons.

“Are you magically exhausted Harry?” asked Remus curiously as the others were still all breathing pretty hard while Harry seemed completely relaxed.

“Not even close,” answered Harry with a shrug.

“What would it take?” asked Remus now genuinely curious and slightly surprised at the young wizard’s answer.

“A lot of magic,” replied Harry with a curious look to his old teacher and friend, “why do you ask?”

“I just wanted to see what it would take to exhaust you?” he answered simply to which Harry only smirked.

“Okay, if you think you can handle it,” Harry responded with a smirk, “just give me one minute to get ready, and then hit me with your strongest bombardia spells.”

“Your protego shield won’t stop that spell Harry?” inquired Remus curiously.

“Who said anything about protego,” laughed Harry to Remus’ wide eyes before lifting his wand and silently casting one of the strongest shields known to wizards, the silver domed aegis fortis, the same spell Dumbledore used defending himself against Voldemort in the Ministry’s atrium.

Remus just about wet himself as he saw the opaque silver shield snap into existence flawlessly, a shield he himself couldn’t support was just silently put up by a sixteen year old adult wizard. He could

tell from the other's looks of astonishment, that they had not yet seen this shield and were staring wide eyed and open mouthed just as he was looking at the young wizard within the beautiful silver shield. They heard Harry yell for them to begin, and quickly tried to snap out of their collective dazes and each began firing their strongest explosion and destruction curses they could to little or no effect for almost five minutes until slowly cracks started to form around the shield's exterior.

Harry would not give up, his stubbornness was legendary at times, and magic was always one of those things he refused to quit at. He was constantly pushing himself past previously held limits and beliefs other took for fact, Harry ignored. When he felt the shield cracking after a good solid five minutes of struggling under the onslaught of his five friends, Harry just followed his instincts and used his anger at almost failing to empower him further as his body outwardly exploded in a swirling vortex of colored light and encompassed the formerly opaque silver shield within the wild torrent of multi-colored magic swirling around him. The shield disappeared, but the swirling multi-colored magic remained in its place and simply absorbed all spells approaching it, effectively shielding Harry for another minute until he could no longer hold it together and he collapsed to his knees panting and sweating beyond belief.

Neville would forever remember this day, and this event as the day his hope was fully restored and renewed in the Light's eventual triumph. When he saw Harry's own aura explode and whip around his friend like a swirling shield he almost fainted in shock. When Ron kept sending the spell at the swirling magic only for it to be absorbed, he finally got in motion and added his own spells to the mix. When the colors and magic started to flicker, everyone stopped firing curses as they watched Harry fall to his knees as the visible light collapsed back into him and he sat there panting and sweating worse than they had seen in a while.

"Bloody Hell Harry," shouted Ron, ever the tactful one before getting a light smack to the back of his head from Hermione who was scrambling to make sure Harry was alright. "Oww, woman that hurt!"



“Good,” snapped Hermione without taking her focus off Harry now that she was next to him and could feel the thickness and heaviness to his lingering magical aura. “Are you alright Harry?”

“Yeah, I will be in a sec,” he responded completely winded and his whole body humming with the feel of his magic despite his exhaustion.

“What were you thinking using the aegis fortis shield?” shouted Hermione accusingly, now that she had determined he wasn’t seriously injured and demanding an answer.

“I got it to work a week ago, only Tonks had seen it but it never quite did that,” answered Harry slowly catching his breath and looking at his friends awed faces, especially Remus’.

“I am so proud of you Harry,” he spoke genuinely, before looking at his other former students, “and all of you.”

“Thanks Remus,” responded a grateful Harry and got several nods of agreement from his friends before they all headed back upstairs for lunch, exhausted and hungry, most just shaking their heads at Harry’s nonchalance at doing something only few wizards were capable of.

After a long lunch, Harry told everyone to take the afternoon off to rest, and that his martial arts class was having a small party afterwards for him and he would be back by ten and Tonks would keep an eye on him. He then went up to his room to make sure he had all the arrangements made, and his outfit picked out and ready to go. A little after three, Harry was too anxious to get going and was dressed in his gi for class going downstairs to wait for Tonks. By three thirty she had arrived and said hello to everyone before her and Harry left and apparated to what had become their customary alley near the dojo, quickly starting in on the snogging since they had spent most of the day apart.

“Um Harry ...are you wearing something under your gi?” asked Tonks after they had shared a few kisses and she was unsuccessful in working her hands under his clothes.

“No ...it’s my clothes for tonight,” he answered with a smirk as they came up for air.

“Clothes? For what, I thought you had class?” she responded in confusion.

“Not tonight Dora ...I am taking you out for your birthday,” he finished with a smirk as he took a step back and removed the gi to reveal the tight black leather pants and electric blue tank top and quickly tipped hair and colored his eyes to match the image on his fake ID.

“You are?” asked Tonks in excited wonder as her eyes slowly traveled over her husband’s body suggestively and with a very hungry look.

“You bet beautiful,” he responded eagerly, “but we have to get a move on, the movie starts in ten minutes.”

The young couple really enjoyed the black and white classic film playing at the old theater, and shared many kisses throughout its playing, and was currently walking hand in hand to their next destination. They ate at a small Italian Restaurant and shared a bottle of wine and large Manicotti over their enjoyable meal shared together. Harry explained how he had gotten them until ten o’clock to return, and promised to go to any bar she wanted after they finished with their meal. Tonks dragged Harry to a small pub not too far from the dojo, and the pair spent the final two hours of their night dancing and drinking and ignoring everyone else, having only eyes for each other as they celebrated Tonks’ birthday.

By ten, they were back in the alley taking a portkey back to Grimmauld Place so as not to apparate while intoxicated, and landed in a crumpled mess in the entry way. They just started to giggle and then laugh, and took several moments to untangle themselves and both get back to their feet by which time several people had come out to see what the noise was. Molly gave Tonks a disappointed glare since it was obvious they were both a little drunk, but Remus stepped forward and promised to take them both upstairs to their rooms and put them to sleep. Remus was the only person in the house that knew the truth of where the newlyweds had spent their evening, and

happily led them to the master bedroom and put up the necessary silencing charms he knew would have their work cut out for them tonight.

The young couple woke up a little late Wednesday morning after the long night of drinking, dancing, and sex and stayed cuddled in bed for a good while talking about the upcoming term at Hogwarts. They were both worried about spending time together alone, but Harry assured Tonks that as long as they kept it private, they would be okay and not have to worry about the Headmaster or getting in trouble. Harry's friends didn't even bother trying to get him up for the morning run after watching him come back drunk last night, and the couple used the extra time until breakfast to cuddle and be intimate before they would be separated for a few days until they could get back together in school.

"Thank you so much Harry, I had the best birthday ever," thanked Tonks happily as they were getting out of the shower and getting dressed for their last day of the summer together.

"It was my pleasure Dora," he responded before wrapping his arms around her and giving her several deep and passionate kisses before heading down to breakfast and leaving her to finalize her outfit and join everyone in a few minutes.

The 30th went by way too quickly since it was the last day for Tonks and Harry to be together before school started, and before either of them knew it they were returning to Grimmauld Place after Harry's second last martial arts. They stayed in their alleyway for several extra minutes snogging and saying their proper goodbyes to one another, even though Harry would be coming to school on Friday, it just felt like so far away. The young couple had become very used to spending their days and nights together now for some time, and neither was looking forward to at least the next two nights alone. They shared a final kiss and pronouncement of their feelings before disappearing to the park near Headquarters and returning to the house for dinner and the weekly Order meeting.

With the Order meeting only forty-five minutes away, the kitchen at Grimmauld Place was extra crowded for dinner beforehand and Harry

was getting a sense of uneasiness that made him restless and worried for the upcoming school year. He was not looking forward to being separated from his wife, even for the two nights, but was at least thankful for the communication earrings so they could at least talk. They quickly found spots at the large table and spent most of the meal somewhat down in their thoughts as the inevitable separation was slowly upon them.

Shortly before eight, Albus and the Hogwarts contingent had arrived for the Order meeting, and announced to the kids that Tonks would be leaving on assignment tonight after the meeting and they would not see her for a while. His overblown twinkle was practically leaking with mirth after his explanation, that even Harry smiled slightly thinking of his friends' reactions to having Tonks as their new DADA teacher. Hermione and Ginny both immediately went to give Tonks hugs, something Harry was quite jealous about since he could only wave and smile as the kids left the kitchen for the Order meeting to begin.

The five teenagers met up with Fred and George while the Order was meeting, and went over their own plans for the DA and the pranks the twins were developing for battle. The twins promised to stay in touch through the earrings after the school year began, and after their impromptu meeting Harry begged off to bed. He didn't want to be around the others tonight, with knowing he was in a foul mood already in the knowledge that Tonks wouldn't be joining him after the Order meeting let out.

Harry was rather restless as the adults discussed security plans for the upcoming year downstairs, he was reading through his growing notebook studying everything he learned this summer and doing everything in his power to keep his mind off his wife. He also spent a good bit of time strengthening his mental defenses and organizing his mind library, trying to solidify the knowledge he had learned and where he now was in his life. He hadn't done a full organization in a while, mostly just assimilating the new memories and information, and it left him missing his wife even more as he realized how much a part of his life she had become over the course of the summer and how much he needed and loved her.

It was a relatively cranky and irritable Harry that came downstairs at the usual time for the morning run on Thursday, having spent a restless night missing his wife and cursing his empty bed and getting very little actual rest. He was looking forward to anything that would help take his mind of his loneliness at the moment, and was glad to have the run and workouts to get into and keep his brain occupied with something else. He had been up for an hour doing Tai Chi inside the tent in his trunk's fifth compartment, and was now ready to really stretch his legs and run out some of his anger and frustration.

He told his friends before they started that there would be no DA practice today and that he would be working out on his own and told them to spend their last day of summer having fun. He then took off running not to see his friends except at meals for the rest of the day. He showed up late to breakfast, having run twice his usual distance, and immediately after retreated to his tent to workout alone. Harry went through every spell he knew, both verbally and silently for hours and not coming downstairs until just after three to get a quick bite to eat and meet Remus who had agreed to take him to his last martial arts class.

The last jujitsu class went by very well, and Harry said his goodbyes to his fellow classmates as well as Sean, who came with Malcolm to see him off as well. Harry was quite sad to be leaving the small class, having learned so much and met so many great people. Soon however, it was just him and Sensei Leung going through the last class of weapons training and the final sword fight between teacher and student. Remus was blown away as he watched his young cub wield a sword like it was an extension of his arm, and could only shake his head at the brilliance that was Harry Potter.

Sensei Leung was very complimentary towards Harry throughout the class, and the young teenager could sense the older Sensei's disappointment in their training classes coming to an end. He gave his young student a set of the training weapons they had used as well as a gi with the dojo's emblem on it and papers of mastery in martial arts and weaponry from the affiliated International Martial Arts Association (IMAA). Harry was speechless as his old Sensei gave him a strong hug at the conclusion of their normal hour practice along with everything else, and could only nod in thanks and appreciation

that Sensei Leung could clearly see in his bright and sparkling green eyes.

Harry and Remus began the slow walk back to the hidden alley in relative silence, one too emotional and feeling a little uncertainty coming from his scar connection and the other truly astounded at what he just saw. When they reached the alley, Harry shrunk all the things from Sensei and pocketed them while still thinking about why now of all times he would get a feeling from Voldemort. No matter how small it felt, Harry knew with the protections he had put in place guarding his end of the connection that something big must be happening for any feelings to get through the link. He wondered if Voldemort was planning some kind of attack tonight before students went back to school, or if it was something else entirely, and touched his earring communication device.

"Call Albus," spoke Harry after pinching and activating the earring, "sir, I just got a twinge from Voldemort. If it got through my barriers, it must be something important, but I don't know anything else, just thought I'd give you the heads up ...no problem sir, bye."

"Your scar hurts?" asked Remus curiously after watching Harry call the Headmaster through his ingenious ear comm as Mad Eye calls them with a worried expression on his tired face.

"Not at all, just a twitch really," replied Harry with a shrug, "but with everything I have protecting the connection on my end, a twitch is more than I've got in weeks."

"Oh ...is that why you are training so hard Harry?" he asked genuinely curious as he switched topics and studied the young wizard in front of him, knowing Voldemort had always been after the young wizard but he had never taken to actually training to fight against him.

"Well, aside from the year you taught me, I have faced some form of Voldemort at the end of every single school year, but I guess the real reason is the Prophecy," he answered simply to which Remus' eyes widened comically as he stuttered uselessly. "Yes, I know what it says, Dumbledore told me after getting back from the Ministry that night."

“W-what does it say?” asked Remus nervously, having heard about the famous ‘Prophecy’ but never thinking anyone but Dumbledore actually knew what it said, and not believing the Headmaster would tell Harry just after watching his Godfather die at the hands of his insane cousin Bellatrix.

Harry didn’t answer the older wizard immediately, and rather looked him seriously in the eyes for several long moments determining whether or not to tell one of the only people he truly trusted. He knew he had to tell Remus, since becoming his Potter Family Account Manager, the man knew more about him than anyone besides his wife. Actually, he was the only person (non-goblin) who knew that Tonks was his wife, Albus just thought they were dating and Harry wasn’t about to correct him any time soon. Remus was his parents’ only true friend left, and his surrogate godfather and uncle and probably the only other person outside of Tonks he would absolutely trust with his life. He broke his staring to cast several silencing, imperturbable, and warding spells to ensure absolute privacy before looking back at Remus with determined and almost burning green eyes.

“The one with the power to defeat the Dark Lord approaches ...born as the seventh month dies ...to those who have thrice defied him ...he will be marked as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not ...and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives. The one with the power to defeat the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies,” spoke Harry slowly and deliberately so Remus could follow every word and he wouldn’t have to repeat it since it wasn’t necessarily what he wanted to talk about with anyone.

“Oh ...fuck,” breathed out Remus in shock as his eyes glazed over and his mind continued to repeat the words in his head, and not understanding how it could all come down to a teenager he loved as his own son.

“Yeah, that pretty much sums it up,” snorted Harry trying to make light of the situation and mood that had suddenly got very depressed, and

not wanting to worry about it anymore. "That's why I train now ...for my survival ...and for Dora."

"She let's you call her Dora?" asked a surprised werewolf whose head shot up at Harry's snort and could totally understand the young wizards newfound determination, but stunned at the name he must call Tonks in private.

"She let's me call her Dora in private," answered Harry with a hard look at Remus' growing smirk, glad to be getting past the Prophecy talk into something much lighter and more enjoyable, while trying to emphasize his point that only he can call her that.

"Relax cub, I have no intentions of incurring her or your wrath," he laughed back defensively, "I value my life too much."

"It's actually really hard for me to call her Tonks now, especially because that's not even any part of her name anymore," answered Harry with a small smile.

"I think she'll always be Tonks to me," responded Remus. "It just fits her."

"Yeah," sighed Harry sadly, thinking about his wife who would usually be here with him right now kissing and enjoying one another's company as he took a long look around the alley he had come to really enjoy this summer.

"You okay Harry?" asked Remus watching the younger wizard look around sadly and wondering what was bothering him all of a sudden.

"Yeah, I just miss her," answered Harry with an honest look directed at Remus that surprised him in its intensity, "and this was kind of our alley."

"Ah," breathed Remus in understanding as he took a lingering look around the darkening and plain looking space between the two buildings that Harry had dubbed as 'our alley'.



“Well, enough reminiscing ...you ready Moony?” added Harry after a moment of comfortable silence.

“You bet cub, I’ll see you at the park,” answered the older wizard who then disappeared with a small pop, shortly followed by a silently disappearing teenager after a final look around the alley.

The pair of wizards met at the park and started the slow walk back to Headquarters making small talk about the upcoming year at Hogwarts. Remus was telling Harry some tails of his own sixth year and the NEWT Charms final Harry would be taking shortly after school started. Harry also explained his plans to paint another portrait tonight of him and Tonks and promised to show Remus if he finished it before he left for Hogwarts tomorrow morning.

“Do you still have the other paintings you did?” asked the older wizard with a curious and excited gleam in his soft amber eyes.

“I’m not planning to get much sleep tonight,” started Harry, “so I can probably make you one. Did you like the Marauder one or the Wedding one?”

“Um ...the Wedding one,” answered Remus reluctantly, and Harry could tell he wanted a copy of both, and now knew exactly what to get him come his birthday in November.

“You got it Moony,” answered Harry with a lopsided smile that was returned by Remus excitedly.

“You really are an amazing young man Harry,” responded Remus sincerely, “I know your parents would be really proud of you, and happy that you found someone you love to share your life with.”

“Thank you Remus,” choked back Harry with difficulty, since he was so emotionally charged since Tonks left early for Hogwarts, and had always wanted to hear those words.

“And I know James and Sirius would have loved to have seen you in that martial arts and weapons class,” continued the older wizard with a fond reminiscent smile.

"Did any of you ever learn?" asked Harry with a happy smile as he imagined their awestruck faces watching him like Remus was.

"Sirius might have had sword lessons as a child by his father, but I'm not positive," responded Remus with a thoughtful expression still with a twinge of pain at thinking about their friend's recent death.

"I'm not surprised, they have a ton of swords in the Black Family Vault," added Harry in a similarly sad resignation.

"I'll bet," commented Remus, "if the Potter Vault has almost a hundred I can only imagine how many the Black's have."

"Oh yeah, that reminds me," started Harry quickly just as they approached Grimmauld Place's front door and pausing before entering to finish his thought. "I wanted to invest some of the Potter money into this muggle company called Microsoft. Sean and Malcolm, those two guys I talked to after class, have been trying to get me hooked up on e-mail, and were telling me all about where Sean works. He says that the company is literally exploding with growth right now, and he and Malcolm had already tripled their initial investment from when he started there three years ago."

"They work with computers right?" asked Remus, one of the few wizards who because of his werewolf affliction had spent a considerable part of his working life in the muggle world.

"Have you ever used one? Dudley had one, but I've never used it," continued Harry.

"I've seen them before but never used one either," answered Remus with a slight chuckle. "I'll get on researching it tomorrow after I see you off at Kings Cross."

"Thanks Remus," replied Harry sincerely as he gave the man a strong hug in appreciation for all he had done for him before straightening up and entering the House of the Black Family hopefully only a little late for the start of dinner as the happily surprised werewolf beamed proudly as he followed the young green eyed wizard inside.

AN: One more chapter and then its done! I have decided on doing a sequel and have begun planning it out slowly. It probably won't be as long (chapter length not quantity) and won't come out until I get out several more of my stories, which I have been working on while I was supposed to be finishing this story.

I am posting the final chapter directly after this one, so it should be up NOW! I am also posting the beginning chapters of three other stories I have been working on for years and have only recently gone back to and revamped. Enjoy your reading; it should keep you occupied for a good long day!

## Chapter 20: The End of Summer

After their final dinner of the summer that Thursday night, Mrs. Weasley told the youngsters to go upstairs and start packing for Hogwarts since they would be leaving relatively early the following morning. With so many people in their group, they had to make sure they had enough time to get to the station on time, and Molly was rather frantic with her two Hogwarts bound children to finish their packing. Harry remembered all too well the craziness that usually occurred at the Burrow on the morning of September First, and had to think the older matron had a pretty good point about being ready ahead of time.

When Harry got upstairs to his bedroom, he took one glance at all of his things scattered about and his multi compartment trunk at the foot of his bed and let out a groan. He knew he should spend some quality time organizing it since over the month he really had taken over the master bedroom suite with his stuff. It was slightly mind numbing for Harry to see how many things he truly owned now and reminded him of the great summer that was coming to a close as he contemplated where to pack everything.

All of his clothes both magical and muggle went into the trunks wardrobe compartment almost filling it to capacity with all the new items Harry had received from others and bought for himself. All the books he bought or at least a copy of everything he had read or wanted to read began filling the library compartment since all the originals had been returned to their respected Family Vaults. All of his random school supplies and knickknacks like his brooms, paintings, and invisibility cloak went into the general compartment after pulling out a blank canvas for his gift to Remus he was planning on working on later, while just about everything else was put somewhere inside the tent occupying the open fifth and final compartment. The only compartment he had yet to really use was the small potions laboratory, although he had re-supplied his school potions kits as well as several other ingredients and the few healing potions he brewed for himself and others, even though he wasn't planning on taking Snape's NEWT Potions class he realized the importance of it.

By eleven that night, Harry had finished his packing, said goodnight to everyone else, talked to Tonks through the earring communication device about her preparations for class and missing each other, and was just finishing with Remus' copy of his parent's Wedding Day painting. It turned out very good, and much like the original only slightly smaller since it wasn't done on a wall above the fireplace and he hoped his honorary godfather would like it, and maybe even hang it in his new office at Gringotts or here at Grimmauld Place where he plans to stay permanently to look after the house and keep up with Order business.

Harry was rather bored and restless, but he knew it was too late to go outside for a run, and didn't really want to go training anyway so he picked up his ever growing notebook and began flipping through the pages as always looking for something to spark his interest. He landed on the entries from the History of Parceltongue book, and remembered the parcelltongue journals he found in the Black Vault and immediately found his Family Ledger and called forth the first of the six Kaleb Peverell Parceltongue Journals he now owned as the Head of the Black Family.

The next few hours were truly amazing as Harry deciphered the squiggly and unusual handwritten parcelltongue that he never knew existed until reading about it from the History book. He couldn't believe he was actually reading the journals of Kaleb Peverell, and was instantly sucked into the text. There was a short introduction of his life from his own perspective, mainly about his snake bonding ceremony and the King Snake he was bonded to at the age of ten as all boys of the Peverell Family undertook. The journal quickly however became a parcelltongue spell bible and had broken down most common spells into their parcelltongue derivative as well as creating his own more unusual ones. By the second journal, every spell Harry had studied at Hogwarts had a parcelltongue version as well as most of those he learned this summer and couldn't wait to get through more.

The squiggly script however, became more and more difficult to read as the night wore on, and by three in the morning Harry could hardly keep his eyes open to decipher the spells he was so eager to learn. He finally set down the journal, and crawled into bed quickly going

through his Occlumency exercises and organizing his mind of the day's events. It only took minutes for Harry to be done and quickly nodding off into sleep knowing tomorrow would be a long day.

He woke at the usual time despite going to bed late since his body had become so accustomed to it, and was slightly unsettled as he gathered his workout clothes. He could vaguely feel an excitement coming from the Dark Lord beating at his barriers at the scar link, but tried to ignore it for now not wanting to open the connection back up to possibly find out what Voldemort was up to. Harry reminded himself to call Dumbledore with his ear comm. when it was a little later in the morning, not wanting to wake the old Headmaster on what had to be a very long day for him as well.

The morning run had been cancelled to let everyone rest and finish packing if they needed to, but Harry had too much restless energy to skip it. He returned with plenty of time for a hot shower before getting fully dressed in his dragonhide pants and vest underneath a bright emerald green t-shirt. The dragonhide pants looked very similar to Harry's now two pairs of leather pants, and decided to not wear anything over them, for once enjoying standing out a little and not ashamed of what he wanted to wear now that he owned his own clothes and was much more comfortable with himself.

He went downstairs for breakfast amidst the customary start of school chaos, and joined Hermione and her parents, Neville and his Grandmother, Remus, and Arthur for a relaxing meal. He presented Remus with the painting of his parents' Wedding Day, which everyone loved and Remus decided to leave in the kitchen since it was the most used room of the house. They all had to laugh as they watched Molly chase Ron and Ginny around as they collected all their possessions and tried to finish packing at the last minute as per usual. Remus took the time to wish Harry a good school year and told him to stay in contact with the ear comm. or to write him. Harry thanked Remus for all his help and for looking out for their house while he was at school and promised to keep in touch regularly.

At nine o'clock on the button, Moody arrived with Kingsley, Hestia Jones, Bill Weasley, Fleur Delacour, and Claire McMahon a relatively new Order member Harry had only met when giving her the ear

comm. It took the group almost fifteen minutes to gather all their things and leave the house and walking to the park before Kingsley called for the Night Bus for the trip to Kings Cross Station. The Bus was packed with early morning travelers and several other Hogwarts students and luckily for those with queasy stomachs, the ride only took another ten minutes until they reached the busy muggle train station.

The large group moved as quickly as they could through the morning crowds, all being pros by now at getting to Platform 9 ¾ without hassle. They passed through the barrier just after ten o'clock, almost an entire hour before the train was scheduled to leave. Surprisingly they were not the first ones to arrive, as a handful of students and their families were milling about greeting friends and saying their goodbyes. They even saw a small contingent of Aurors in their navy blue robes patrolling the station for signs of trouble in three groups of four as they loaded their trunks into a compartment on the train and came back to hang out for the train's departure with their escorts and families.

"Hi Harry," spoke a familiar voice to the teenager's left, "I like your earring and dragonhide pants."

"Luna!" exclaimed Harry happily as he spotted the large blue eyes and shorter blonde hair of his unusual friend and surprised several people around by giving her a warm hug while whispering in her ear. "I'm glad you like them, and thank you so much for the journal Luna you're a great friend."

"You're welcome Harry," she responded as they slowly broke the hug with happy smiles on their faces, "so how was your summer?"

"It was pretty great surprisingly," answered Harry easily, but not wanting to get too involved in his answer here. "You about you, did you and your Dad find the Snorkack?"

"You bet we did!" she responded excitedly. "They were in this desolate field in Hungary, the Quibbler is running the article and pictures to appear in next weeks issue."

"That's brilliant," answered Harry as he noticed several of his friends and who appeared to be Luna's father approach them. "Hello Mr. Lovegood."

"Hello Mr. Potter," spoke the thin and short blonde haired man with graying hair at his temples and paler blue eyes than his daughter and an oblivious smile on his face. "I've heard a lot about you, it's a pleasure to finally meet you."

"You too sir," responded Harry shaking the older wizard's hand firmly while giving him a small smile in reply.

"Please call me Xenophilius, sir or mister makes me feel old and stuffy," replied Mr. Lovegood with a look that told everyone exactly how much he disliked being old and stuffy.

"Um ...okay," replied a slightly confused Harry as he looked over the probably thirty five to forty year old man with a lopsided grin at his obvious childlike exuberance and not knowing what to really make of the man who single handedly ran the Quibbler magazine.

"Wonderful," replied the jovial wizard as he smiled and nodded to the large group that Harry came with that was now gathering together as more people began filling up the Platform.

Luna looked at Harry with an unreadable expression on her innocent looking face after greeting everyone and watching her father now do the same. Harry just smiled at the younger Ravenclaw before Hermione started in on her usual barrage of questions on Luna's summer to which she had to respond. She unfortunately wasn't able to as she opened her mouth to speak, the clock in the Platform rang announcing it was ten thirty.

No sooner had the chimes ended that a sudden rush of cloaked figures came barreling through the magical gateway onto the train station. The noise was enough for several people to turn in their direction and most stopped in fear. Harry was one of the first to realize who the new arrivals were, and had instantly pulled out both wands not caring if others new about his new wand formed from his parent's old ones.



“Death Eaters,” he shouted alertly just before several terrified shrieks ripped through the crowd of students and parents as the Order, Aurors, and his friends all turned and quickly tried to prepare to face the oncoming threat.

“Avada Kedavra,” came the simultaneous shouts of at least five of the front line of masked Death Eaters as their fellow brethren continued to flood the Platform and the sickly green light of the killing curses spread out before them towards the unprepared crowds.

For Harry, the whole thing seem to occur in slow motion as he watched two of the five curses heading towards his group while the other three targeted the three four man Auror teams. His wands already in hand, he flicked his right wrist conjuring a brick wall big enough to cover his entire group from the incoming curses, and with his new wand in his left hand sent a very powerful banishing charm a second behind. The tactic actually worked flawlessly since the brick wall managed to take the two killing curses completely shattering it into pieces of rock and dust which were then banished at high speed towards the large concentration of arriving Death Eaters who were completely unprepared.

The flying debris took down several Death Eaters immediately who were hit by too large of pieces or in too sensitive of areas and put the rest of the Death Eaters who had arrived on the defensive. Harry along with everyone else around him quickly took advantage of their slight fortune and pulled out their wands and began sending curses towards the still arriving Death Eaters who were now numbering almost three dozen. Harry took a brief pause to grab his ear comm. and speaking as quickly and clearly as he could.

“Call everyone, Death Eaters attacking Platform 9 ¾ at least three dozen so far, SEND HELP!” rushed out Harry before abandoning the ear comm. and throwing several more curses into the mix as the fight seemed to step up a notch in intensity as the Death Eaters fought back with a vengeance.

The Death Eaters had arrived as four teams, each group of ten under the command of one experienced or Inner Circle member and flooded

through the magical gateway onto Platform 9 ¾ at precisely ten thirty as ordered by their master. The first team through had barely arrived when it seemed that all hell broke loose. What was supposed to be a terrorize mission to instill fear quickly turned into a battle as many of the second team entered the fray to find a brick wall exploding into them sending more than half of them the ground and a few to never get back up. The few capable immediately tried to help their fallen and move away from the crowding barrier as there were still more Death Eaters coming through behind them and the explosion of the wall in their midst was a real hindrance to movement and visibility.

Martin Travers and Xavier Yaxley lead the first two teams through the barrier, and subsequently took the brunt of the damage initially before the other teams and their leaders, Alecta and Amycus Carrows joined in the attack. Yaxley and Travers slowly took their smaller and more diminished groups and moved towards the Aurors who had not put up any resistance to the first set of killing curses and had lost two from the very get go, as well as a nearby parent. The Aurors were quickly under fire from the almost dozen Death Eaters from the first two groups and were quickly losing ground.

Mad-Eye Moody and Bill Weasley were both shocked and impressed at Potter's quick thinking and used the slight distraction to their advantage and made their way closer to the struggling Aurors and large crowd of frightened students and their families as the first group of Death Eaters split towards them. Kingsley, Hestia, Fleur and Claire were a bit behind them and slightly separated from the retired Auror and Cursebreaker and were quickly engaged in serious duels. By the time they reached the Aurors, most had fallen dead and several others currently lay dying as they took up the fight with the remainder of the first two teams of Death Eaters.

Alecta and Amycus Carrows and their teams had flooded the Platform as the dust and debris was still settling in their immediate area, and quickly took their teams in the other direction from the first two and engaged most of the remaining students and few Order members. A few of their numbers helped revive or check on their fallen near the Platform's entrance before joining into the fray wherever it looked they could cause the most destruction.

Augusta Longbottom and Molly Weasley were both frantically trying to protect the children, and didn't realize in all the confusion that their children were fighting more capably than them right next to them. Hermione and Ron were each standing in front of Hermione's terrified parents guarding them as best they could from the Death Eaters. Ginny and Neville had both been able to offer some cover and support for the adults as they used everything their friend and leader taught them to take down as many Death Eaters as they could and prevent them from reentering the fight, and felt fortunate they had the smallest of the groups to deal with.

After conjuring and banishing the brick wall, and calling everyone to help, Harry along with Remus, Arthur, Luna, and Xenophilius gathered together and engaged the incoming second teams of Death Eaters through the barrier. It didn't take long before the five of them were becoming overwhelmed despite taking several permanently out of the fight there always seemed to be more to take its place. Harry was sending almost exclusively cutting curses and bone breaking hexes along with a *parceltongue* *incarcerous* that nobody but he and probably Voldemort could undo and snake face didn't seem to be showing up.

He felt they were slowly starting to even the odds after dropping two opponents at once with an overpowered *reducto* at almost point blank range that probably killed the two Death Eaters. Harry wasn't too worried about that right now as he was hit in the side with a nasty cutting curse to his unprotected shoulder that dropped him to his knees. Harry quickly calmed his breathing and cast a quick healing spell to stop the blood flow as he noticed the many battles still going on around him and hoped they all lived to see tomorrow.

A pair of ear piercing screams of pain erupted almost in unison just to Harry's left causing Harry's head to whip around and find the source as several of the other battles occurring also seemed to pause slightly. Remus and Arthur were both on the ground just to his left both being held under spell fire by one of the Carrows twins. Arthur seemed to be suffering under a *cruciatu*s curse from Amycus as his sister Alecta was holding Remus under a spell that seemingly shot small silver shrapnel into his skin making his body convulse worse than Arthur's.

Mad-Eye had rather quickly met up with someone he knew too well from his fighting style alone, and the two old roommates battled fiercely. Xavier Yaxley, his former childhood friend and Slytherin roommate and he had fought many times over the years since leaving Hogwarts and going completely separate directions, and neither had much of an edge over the other. Bill had unluckily met up with Martin Travers, John Gibbons' best friend among the Death Eaters, who fought like a man possessed against the Gringotts Cursebreaker who had defeated and captured his comrade at the Battle of the Burrow last month.

Kingsley, Fleur, and Hestia were both protecting Claire with everything they had, as she had both of her legs shattered and was slowly dying on the ground if she didn't get medical attention and fast. They had taken down several of the remaining mid-level and rookie Death Eaters from the first group, but were fading quickly from all the strain and the four final Death Eaters they were fighting were slowly gaining the advantage over them. Molly and Augusta were both still standing through sheer will alone and had suffered a great many cuts and bruises as they tried to fight and protect the children from the last several of the masked creeps.

Hermione and Ron too were both just about to collapse from exhaustion and injuries they sustained while protecting Hermione's parents and thankfully were helped by Neville and a limping Ginny who were still fighting valiantly. They were all thanking the extra running and training now as they knew without it they would have fallen minutes ago. The four friends were battling with four equally effective Death Eaters and didn't seem to be making or losing ground when the screams rent through the air, giving them all chills and pausing their battles momentarily.

A team of twenty Aurors and a few Order members along with the Headmaster fought their way through the barrier onto the Platform just in time to hear the dual screams that echoed everywhere. They all paused to look around at all the damage and carnage they were met with before several people rushed off to help those they could see needing help. The screams were too far away from the barrier at

this point, and couldn't see what was happening at the far end of the Platform where it seemed the most fighting was still taking place.

The additional Aurors were quickly able to get to the struggling Hestia, Fleur, and Kingsley as well as Molly and Augusta, and the kids taking care of their attacking Death Eaters with their greater numbers as they began the sweep through the Platform. They however wouldn't interfere with the two duels going on between their mentor Moody and the oldest Weasley whose fights both seemed to be moving too fast to help anyway. They quickly secured as many of the Death Eaters they could and began tending to some of the injured and dead as they continued their sweep towards the end of the Platform where all the action seemed to be happening.

Dumbledore and the four teachers he brought with him quickly headed to the deepest part of the Platform where the heavier fight and screams seemed to be taking place. Filius, Minerva, Pomfrey, and Tonks fearfully followed the Headmaster hoping for the best as they navigated through the several injured, captured, and deceased bodies of friends, students, and enemies scattered throughout the area hoping they weren't too late. When they neared the end of the Platform however, they could only look on in shock as they realized who was still fighting.

Harry had absolutely lost it the moment he saw the two men who were now the closest he would have to a father suffer at the hands of the Carrows twins. The same twins who he and Tonks fought at the Battle of the Burrow, and who had tried to kill his wife. Harry saw red as he leapt to his feet and quickly engaged both Unspeakable Death Eaters simultaneously, unconcerned about his minor injuries and lack of energy or the increasing multi colored glow that started radiating off his body and feeding him energy as the fight stepped up in ferocity. He only cared about one thing at the moment, and that was ending the Carrows Family permanently and threw everything he had into fighting the two talented twins remarkably well.

Harry didn't care or notice anything around him as he continued trading spells against the combined force of the Death Eater Unspeakable twins, while those around him whose battles had started ending with the arrival of the Aurors and Dumbledore, stared

on in absolute shock. Luna was still standing, although not well as she protected her father, Remus, and Arthur from the fight going on and sighed in relief as she spotted the teacher's and Dumbledore's arrival hoping they could make sure Harry survived when none of the others had fared well against either twin let alone both of them together.

Harry had to quickly spin out of the way in order to dodge a putrid yellow spell from Aletha, and spun right into a roundhouse kick hitting Amicus in the head and sending him flying to the ground. Without wasting any time and using her fallen brother as a distraction Harry sent dual arrows simultaneously from each wand at the vicious witch. She lunged in time to avoid the arrow aimed at her chest, but was clipped by the other in her right shoulder sending her screaming and twisting to the floor. Before Harry could even press the advantage however, the voice of Amicus to the left froze him in his tracks.

"I hope the Dark Lord likes his present," he snarled roughly as a familiar female voice screamed to be let go.

Harry didn't need to turn around to know that Amicus must have grabbed Luna from the mixed look from Aletha of pain from her shoulder and triumph at her brother's catch. He shot another pair of silent arrows at Aletha and instantly spun and lowered himself to present less of a target to her brother if he retaliated, knowing he had to do something to help Luna. The coward simply smirked the moment Harry turned to see him, and with Luna's arms pinned at her side by his left arm his right arm activated an emergency portkey and caused them both to instantly disappear.

"LUNA!" screamed the pain filled voice of her father from his spot bleeding on the ground from the dark cutting curse he took across his arm and shoulder while his wide eyes were filled with tears as he stared at the spot just occupied by his only daughter.

"Serves you right blood traitor," sneered Aletha before several curses were fired at her from different people and she followed her brother's lead and used her good left arm to activate her emergency portkey as she left behind a puddle of her blood from wounds to her right

shoulder and left leg after trying to dodge the second set of Potter's dual arrows unsuccessfully.

"FUCK!" shouted Harry in a rage few had witnessed as he stood panting heavily and bleeding from several cuts littering his body staring at the empty spots of the Carrows twins and one of his good friends.

"Boss, we just lost four prisoners," spoke some rookie Auror as the four prisoners vanished with their team leaders when the Carrows activated their emergency portkeys, it also called for the rest of their team, most who couldn't leave because of Harry's parsel-tongue incarceration.

"Tied portkeys," spoke a grumbling Mad-Eye Moody as he approached the group all looking at the still raging young wizard who didn't seem to be even trying to calm down at the moment, upset that Yaxley managed to give him the slip again.

"Harry?" asked Albus kindly, hoping to get through to his young student and not invoke his wrath, but was ignored as another Auror shouted over the low noise of the injured.

"These ones are tied up with snakes," came his shout of fear as several others joined him, "I can't get them off either."

"You won't," growled Harry angrily as he ignored everyone and quickly made his way to the snake-tied Death Eaters he had captured hoping he still had a chance to get to Luna.

A quick wave of his wand and hissed finite cancelled the snake binding spell on all six of the captured Death Eaters, five of which were in no condition to move and were sporting numerous injuries as well. The lone awake and conscious Death Eater was quickly silenced by Harry who stood directly in front of him waiting for him to do something. The stupid Death Eater's slight lifting of his empty wand arm was all Harry waited for, and then he slammed his forehead into the man's nose smashing it completely. Before anyone knew what was happening, Harry had ripped off the left sleeve of the Death Eater's cloak and grabbed the tainted Dark mark firmly and

twisted the man's arm around behind his back painfully and held it at its breaking point as his holly wand dug into the Death Eater's exposed neck drawing a small trail of blood.

"I found my ride to Voldemort," growled an intense Harry that nobody seemed to be stopping, as he took a quick look around at everyone's wide eyed faces and knew they all thought him crazy now. "I love you all, and will see you soon," he added while looking mostly at Tonks without letting everyone else who didn't already know and realize he was mainly speaking to her before he disappeared with a crack that silenced the Platform.

Harry had immediately felt out Voldemort when he grabbed the unlucky Death Eater's Dark Mark, and much like the half-blood and parselmouth Riddle, was able to control the mark to some degree. He said his goodbye to Tonks and reminded himself why he fought and why he HAD to survive, before gathering his magic and using his grasp on the Dark Mark to guide him to where he felt Voldemort, knowing that is were Luna would be taken. The loud crack upon departing was to counter the excess magic he used to soften the crack upon arrival and not sound too suspicious when he appeared seconds later inside the dark throne room of Lord Voldemort, which he had only ever seen in visions.

The room was very large and carved out of seemingly dark gray stone with very little actual light or decorations minus the many blood stains on the floors and walls, and was currently not very full of Voldemort's supporters. He guessed there were five or six Death Eaters total, and quickly spotted the two Carrows upon arriving and noticed the slightly squirming Luna still in Amycus' strong grasp. As the Carrows twins with Luna approached the throne of Voldemort, the three Death Eaters standing before the Dark Lord backed away to the side before Amycus threw Harry's friend down onto the ground in front of the Dark Lord before the twins both prostrating themselves in full bows to the floor. Harry knew he would be noticed any second, and had to act quick and use what little advantage he had. He was eternally grateful for silencing the unlucky Death Eater trying to scream as Harry took the few seconds to collect his bearings and make his plan.



"My Lord, Potter was there and he is," started Amicus shakily as he slowly rose from his bow only to be silenced.

"Diffindo," Harry whispered overcharging the cutting spell and sending it right at the back of the slowly rising head of an unknowing Amicus, instantly granting him what Sir Nicholas had wanted for centuries, and enjoying the shock on Voldemort's face as he and Alecia both whipped out their wands and took aim at the spells original location. But Harry had already shot two more over charged cutting curses at the group of three too slow Death Eaters to the side, and dropped all three of the unknown enemies into quickly growing pools of their own blood before he had to react to the retaliating spells.

"Avada Kedavra," shouted both Voldemort and Alecia Carrows in an eerily reminiscent unison Alecia usually only shared with the now decapitated Amicus at her feet, as the pair's twin green curses rocketed towards Harry.

Harry luckily didn't have to worry about Alecia's curse which was slightly off target, so when Voldemort's killing curse neared him, he pushed the unfortunate Death Eater he had forced and used to get here in its path and then banished his dead body directly back towards the surprised Dark Lord. He wasted no time in pulling out his second wand and hoping the third time was a charm, he shot twin arrows once again at Alecia who had moved to avoid the dead projectile heading toward her and couldn't recover in time to survive the third dual arrow attempt. Both magical arrows struck her firmly in the chest and she had a single wide eyed moment to stare in disbelief at who she now knew killed both her brother and then her.

Harry then sent several reducto blasts at the back ceiling of the throne room with one wand seeing slight movement, as he summoned Luna's still and lying body with the other. Harry had to quickly spin away from the Dark Lord's incoming cruciatus curse before Luna even reached him, since the older wizard was easily able to avoid the dead Death Eater that was banished towards him and return fire to this upstart who dared attack him at his base. The Dark Lord would have to teach this foolish and brave wizard.

The unknown foolish and brave wizard definitely had skill; the Dark Lord would grant that to anyone that could kill both Carrows twins within seconds of each other as well as the three Death Eaters the Dark Lord was just planning on elevating to the Inner Circle. The new upstart was incredibly foolish however for coming here, since only those with a Dark Mark could enter or leave and now that his human carpool ride and shield was dead, he soon would be as well. How he had managed to use the new Spanish Death Eaters Dark Mark to find this place and get inside was another mystery all together, but unless he had somehow managed to get a portkey created by Him, the unknown wizard was now trapped in the throne room, and was someone to be weary of when cornered since only an insane person would willingly come here to fight. He caught a slight view of his attacker's face in the dim light, and had to growl in anger and rage that it would be him.

"Potter," the Dark Lord hissed with a growing rage far beyond that which he was previously displaying when the attacker was just an unknown foolish wizard.

"Hi Tom," chirped Harry much like one of the Creevey brother's would greet him, knowing it would probably make Voldemort even more enraged, and boy was he right.

"MY NAME IS LORD VOLDEMORT!" he screamed as his eyes burned a malicious crimson blood color and he began panting in rage staring intensely at his young nemesis.

"Whatever helps you sleep at night Tom," replied Harry insignificantly, and wondering now how to get out of here with Luna and hoping more Death Eaters weren't about to show up or interfere since he thought there was at least one still hiding in the back corner of the room that if he had to guess, was a silver handed rat.

"Crucio," spat Voldemort repeatedly at Harry who was quickly becoming hard pressed to avoid them all or conjure something in their path as he tried valiantly to come up with some way out of here now. "You can't run and hide forever Potter."

“I’m still here Tom,” responded Harry cheekily after dodging another vicious string of killing curses and crucios, and quickly sending his own cutting curses and arrows whenever he had the opportunity hoping to get lucky with one of his attacks to slow down Riddle.

Harry was quickly starting to tire from all the intense fighting and magic he had been doing already today, and was having more and more difficulty sending his own curses back. He had to almost completely abandon his attacks and focus on the seemingly never ending string of unforgivable curses continually on target and heading straight for him. He realized that he still had a long way to go until he would be capable of challenging the Dark Lord as his true equal, but was at least encouraged by his small successes in avoidance and counter-attacks.

Harry sent two pairs of arrows at the Dark Lord when he had a brief moment to get in a spell and even managed to land one of them in his leg, but suffered greatly for his efforts by getting hit with a crucio in retaliation. That immediately changed the fighting style, since it knocked Harry to the ground in pain and caused Voldemort to quickly heal his leg and despite his growing anger at being hit, start laughing at finally catching up to the elusive Harry Potter. The moment the unforgivable pain curse was lifted thanks to his first successful hit of Voldemort with the arrow, Harry shrugged off his pain and sluggishness like none the Dark Lord had ever seen and leapt to his shaky feet almost staggering backwards before balancing himself and readying for the Dark Lord’s next attack.

“You have definitely improved, but you can never match the power of the Dark Lord. I will enjoy torturing you Potter,” hissed Voldemort with an evil sneer on his snake like face as he stared intensely at the younger wizard who always proved such a menace, “crucio.”

This time Harry was ready with a plan of his own, and quickly pulled Amycus’ nearby headless corpse in front of him to take the spell, and watched in disgust as the deceased twin was convulsing post mortem. A thin gold necklace pendant was flung from the shaking and deceased headless body and landed several feet away near a clump of robes Harry realized with a start was Luna. Harry took one look at

Voldemort as he prepared to throw another curse and dove for his friend and the necklace hoping it was a portkey to anywhere but here.

“Reducto,” shouted the wide eyed Dark Lord as he realized what his nemesis was diving towards and saying the first spell he thought of and watched it race toward the two teenagers with a hopeful expression on his snake like face thinking this could be the end of Potter.

Harry landed next to Luna as the red light of Voldemort’s destructive blast neared their position on the floor. He grabbed Luna’s arm, and twisted his body in front of the incoming spell to block her as he grabbed the necklace with his wand in hand and desperately yelled activate while clutching it tightly. He felt the hook around his naval pull him away just as he felt something very painful slam into his side with a crack and twisting his body around wildly, but he refused to let go of either hand. The pair landed in a crumpled heap in a dark and foreboding living room parlor decorated very distastefully in typical Death Eater fashion as a small puddle of blood started forming underneath him.

Harry let out a painful grimace and examined his dragonhide vest and now completely exposed side. The vest was literally destroyed and had a large hole the size of Harry’s head torn out from the impact of the spell leaving the skin underneath cut up and bleeding pretty heavily. Harry had immense difficulty taking a few required deep breaths to calm himself and try to get them out of wherever they were. He let his quickly weakening magic feel out around him for anti-apparation wards, and had to groan as he realized he would need to leave the house in order to apparate to safety.

“Luna, are you okay?” whispered Harry painfully, once realizing he needed to walk outside, and knew he would need Luna’s help to hopefully accomplish that task, “can you hear me?”

“Harry?” she whispered almost too quietly to hear as she slowly lifted her tear streaked and terrified face to be meet with the pain filled eyes of her friend and savior.

"Yeah Luna, its me," he answered in relief that she seemed conscious and relatively alright for someone who probably just got her first look at Voldemort and had been pretty roughed up during the fight on the Platform. "Can you help me stand, we need to walk outside quickly before Voldemort shows up here and then I can apparate us back to your Dad?"

"Okay," she responded meekly and with a good bit of fear at the prospect of the Dark Lord coming for them as she quickly and shakily rose to her own feet before helping the struggling and bleeding Harry to stand and lean against her as they found their way out of what appeared to be the Carrows' house.

Once they got outside, they had to shield their eyes from the bright light of the sun, and neither could imagine that it was still daytime after all the fighting and dark places they had been recently. Harry had to take several very painful steadying breaths as he concentrated on returning to Platform 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  and hoping they took down the wards while investigating everything. He gave Luna a pain filled lopsided smile and grabbed her hand tightly just as he heard the telltale crack of someone apparating inside the house, and knew Voldemort had followed them. With a desperate last push of magic into getting the hell out of there, there was a loud crack when he apparated the pair of them to London's train station and directly onto Platform 9  $\frac{3}{4}$ .

Harry collapsed the moment they arrived and brought Luna tumbling down with him as he could no longer support himself and apparating threw him off completely with all the pain he was in being squeezed through the tube so to speak. His groaned gasp of pain when landing on his raw and injured side following the loud crack of his arrival brought immediate attention and eyes to their location. Harry rolled slightly to alleviate the pressure on his ribs and painfully tried to take in enough oxygen to breathe properly as he heard several shouts and screams and footsteps heading towards him.

"Luna, my baby," shouted the happiest and loudest voice of them all as Xenophilius ran to his daughter and dropped to the ground next to her helping her to sit as he pulled her into a protective and loving hug, "I thought I lost you."

"I know dad, but Harry needs our help," she spoke quickly and her father immediately released her and turned to the other figure still lying on the ground next to his daughter as several people gathered around them.

"Harry?" called a crying Tonks as his body was rolled slightly so he was lying on his back and everyone could see the hole in his shirt and vest and the bloody and injured side that was now exposed to view and forming a small puddle of blood underneath him.

"Dear Merlin boy, what did you do?" asked Madam Pomfrey quickly sweeping down on the injured teenager and running a diagnostic spell that made her act fast. "I need Skelegro, post-cruciatu, lots of blood restorative, pain relief, and pepper up potions immediately. He has several broken ribs, a punctured lung, internal bleeding, a dislocated shoulder, a concussion, and severe magical exhaustion."

Harry kept fading in and out as Madam Pomfrey quickly and painfully reset his broken bones and then fixed the tears in his lungs and other internal bleeding, as well as the exterior cuts to his side and shoulder. Once that was done, they force fed him several vials of blood restorative potion and when that settled, gave him a healthy dose of Skelegro to help the healing bones mend faster. By that point, Harry was able to stay conscious, although in quite a bit of pain and discomfort until they were able to give him the post-cruciatu and pain relief potions and he began feeling much better and more with it. Despite the discomfort still in his chest which seemed to be quickly getting better as he could take deeper and deeper breaths without pain, Harry was quickly feeling better with everyone around him, especially his wife Tonks. Luckily most of his friends heavily involved in the fighting on the Platform were there to watch Madam Pomfrey patch him back up, after having the same done to them in the half-an-hour since Harry left to bring back Luna, and they all seemed more or less okay now.

"Where's Remus and Arthur?" he whispered after finally being given a brief respite from the hospital matron as he looked at the faces of those around him, and couldn't find the two in question that had started his fight with the Carrows.

"They're both going to be fine," answered the twinkling eyes of Albus Dumbledore as he looked proudly down at his favorite student in one of the transfigured hospital beds. "They were taken to St. Mungos, but should both be released this afternoon."

"Thank Merlin," breathed out Harry in relief as he closed his eyes in peace to help gather himself.

"After today, I think we should stop thanking Merlin and start thanking Harry," spoke a sarcastic Ron as he gave his best mate the largest smile he could remember, after he again saved his dad and Luna.

"Please don't," groaned Harry as he stared at Ron to judge if he was joking or not and couldn't be sure, but got several chuckles of amusement from those gathered. "Is everyone else okay?"

"Yeah, we were all fixed up in no time," spoke up Neville assuredly as he held a comforting arm around Ginny's shoulders in appreciation for her actions in saving him near the end, and making sure he got the proper medical help after having suffered from a pretty severe concussion.

"Kingsley is also being treated at St. Mungos, and should be fully recovered by tomorrow," added Tonks as she gave her husband a large smile with watery and love filled eyes which Harry returned equally.

"Thank goodness," responded Harry gratefully, and was getting slightly choked up emotionally at seeing his wife look at him with such loving eyes, but knowing they were only telling him about the good news, and turned to Mad-Eye knowing he would give it to him straight. "Who did we lose?"

"Claire and eleven Aurors died, as well as the father's of Anthony Goldstein and Zacharias Smith, Patricia Helms and her daughter Samantha a third year Gryffindor were also killed. Others have injuries, but they should all make recoveries," rattled off the hardened retired Auror who never took either eye off the green eyes of the wizard before him out of respect.

"The Death Eater I used as my ride was the one responsible for the mother and daughter, I got there too late," replied Harry softly but with a look of gratitude at the old Auror for telling it to him straight.

"I can't believe you came for me," whispered Luna softly after a pause in the conversation when everyone seemingly paid their silent respect to the deceased, as she looked at Harry with such appreciation shining in her clear big blue eyes.

"I will always come for you," answered Harry honestly as he looked around at his gathered friends, teachers, wife, and Order members, "I will come for all of you."

"I, Xenophilius Lovegood, Head of House Lovegood" started the eccentric father of Luna and editor of the Quibbler as he held his wand aloft and spoke his oath sincerely into the growing silence after Harry's proclamation, "do hereby pledge on my life and magic to follow and aid Harry Potter in any way I can for the rest of my days, so mote it be."

Harry and everyone else could only stare on in amazement as Luna's father pledged himself to Harry's cause in a very binding Magical Oath, sealed by magic itself when both he and Harry flashed a brilliant white for a short second. Harry had seen a few magical oaths taking place, but never had he witnessed that, and felt it to be a heartfelt response to saving the man's only daughter. He knew there was nothing he could do about it anyway, so just shrugged and smiled at Xenophilius and Luna letting them know it was okay with him.

"I am truly forever in your debt Mr. Potter," spoke Xenophilius after recovering from his oath and looking intensely at the teenage wizard that did the unthinkable. "You saved my little girl, the only thing I have left in this world, I owe you so much."

"There's no way I would let that snake faced bastard hurt any of my friends if I can help it," responded Harry sincerely and with an unmatched intensity in his burning green eyes that everyone could see and believe.



“Will you tell us what happened Harry?” asked Hermione uncertainly and with a concerned glance to Luna, unsure if either of them would want to talk about it.

“Let me just put up some silencing wards to prevent being overheard,” added Albus with twinkling eyes filled with curiosity at what truly happened today before quickly casting two spells to ensure their privacy and eagerly motioning for Harry to begin his tale.

“Sure, I might as well. So, I used that prisoner’s Dark Mark to feel out where Voldemort was,” started Harry softly and ignoring the gasps of fear at the Dark Lord’s name, not minding telling his own little group of friends, teachers, and Order members what really happened. “When we arrived, I took out Amicus immediately and used my prisoner as a shield when Voldemort and Alecta sent killing curses at me, and then banished him at Voldemort and removed the few other Death Eaters in the throne room, took down Alecta, and summoned Luna to me. Voldemort recovered and we fought for a bit, I had to use Amicus to block some incoming spells at one point, and saw a portkey necklace fall from him at Luna’s feet. I grabbed Luna and the necklace and portkeyed out of there just as Voldemort hit me with a reducto. We landed in what I think was the Carrows’ Living Room and quickly walked outside and apparated back just as Voldemort showed up, and here we are.”

“Oh, is that all?” responded Ron with a heavy sarcasm as most were simply staring open mouthed at Harry’s nonchalant tone and shaking their heads in a combination of awe and disbelief.

“D-did you k-kill the Carrows and other Death Eaters?” asked a wide eyed Xenophilius as he studied the teenager in silent awe as a few people gasped slightly in realization that he wasn’t very clear on how the Death Eaters were taken down.

“Yes,” breathed out Harry flatly and with almost no emotion as he studied the reactions of his friends wondering how they would take the news, and knowing it would be an inevitability of this war and one he had begun to understand this summer with Tonks’ help.

Only Molly and Hermione gasped in slight shock and fear, while Augusta, Neville, Tonks, McGonagall, Flitwick, and Hestia gasped differently in amazement and with a weird sense of gratitude mixed with surprise. Ginny kind of squeaked like a mouse and buried her head in Neville's shoulder as he still had his arm wrapped around her shoulders for support. Ron almost choked on his own spit while Hagrid, Bill, Moody, and Xenophilius paled but said nothing, each knowing how dangerous the twin Unspeakables were and not knowing how Harry was truly taking all of this.

Albus studied his young student closely, and didn't miss the relief on his face at his friends' survival, or the many hidden looks in Tonks' direction and knew the young wizard was looking for her support and acceptance at his actions. The Headmaster was not a fan of death, but knew the inevitability of it when it came to fighting Tom and his Death Eaters and knew Harry was and would be no stranger to taking someone's life. Harry was doing what was necessary, and as much as he didn't like condoning killing, he truly could not blame the young wizard for his attitude or actions. He had already lost so much to this war, and was truly taking his stand on the front lines in a way Albus couldn't help but be proud of. Harry was a true fighter and hero, and the old wizard was once again amazed at the strength of character the young green eyed wizard had, and could only smile reassuringly at him to show his support and understanding.

"I think we can talk more on these matters later at Hogwarts," started the Headmaster grandly and with a look around the busy Platform and telling everyone in their group they were done with the questions for now before he cancelled his spells. "Alastor and I will go talk with the Aurors, I think the students should start to get on the train, we'll have it depart in the next twenty minutes to get you all to Hogwarts."

"But sir, it's already after noon ...we'll be late for the feast?" blurted Ron thinking only of his stomach as usual.

"Don't worry Mr. Weasley;" answered Dumbledore with a happy smile and twinkling of his eyes, "the train will still arrive at the appropriate time for the start of term feast."

“How?” asked a curious Hermione, never wanting to pass up any opportunity to learn something new.

“Magic,” responded the Headmaster with a wink at Harry, having heard the teenager use the excuse many times over his five years already at school, and thinking it fit perfectly in this instance, and judging by Harry and Ron’s smiles and Hermione’s groan, he was quite successful.

“The train will simply travel at a faster speed,” answered Minerva in a huff to her favorite student before she gave her patented glare towards the Headmaster and the two smiling and now sheepish looking teenagers.

“I liked your answer better sir,” whispered Harry making sure he was loud enough for everyone to hear, since that was usually his answer to most of Hermione’s questions and everyone present knew it and laughed at Hermione’s growl of annoyance and McGonagall’s tut of disapproval.

“Thank you Harry,” responded Albus with a happy smile, “are you going to be able to ride the train with your friends ...or would you like me to have Madam Pomfrey take you straight to the hospital wing?”

“Do you even have to ask?” retorted Harry incredulously, which drew several more chuckles from the gathered group and a huff from the hospital matron. “Sorry Madam Pomfrey, but I’d rather be in Potions class than the hospital wing.”

“Good,” the matron responded with a smug grin, “then next time you’re hurt, I’ll just send you to Professor Snape.”

“Let’s not be too hasty now,” pleaded Harry desperately, wanting nothing to do with the greasy git, but knowing the school nurse was only half joking and would always want to treat Harry herself since she had already got so much practice with him in the past.

“As long as you come by the hospital wing after the feast so I can give you a quick checkup,” she added in her strictly business tone as

she looked at the teenager with accusatory eyes, demanding the proper answer.

“Yes Ma’am,” saluted Harry happily and reached out for Ron and Neville to each take one of his hand and slowly haul him to his feet as the Headmaster stepped away and announced the train’s new departure time and for the students to say their goodbye’s to their families and board the Hogwarts Express.

The next few minutes flew by in a flurry of activity as all the adults did their rounds of saying goodbye to everyone. Molly alone must have hugged Harry a dozen times in appreciation at coming to Arthur’s rescue, and Xenophilius gave him several firm handshakes and offers of thanks. Augusta Longbottom even thanked him personally for the positive changes in her Neville, and patted Harry’s cheek affectionately before hugging and kissing Neville goodbye. Tonks even managed to get in a quick hug under the guise of thanks for helping Remus, before her and the teachers departed to help get the other students onto the train to which Harry was eternally grateful. Bill and Mad-Eye both gave Harry serious looks of respect and firm handshakes, neither saying much since the battle began still somewhat unprepared for Harry’s growing skills and magic, but grateful none the less for his immense help today.

Harry said his final goodbye’s to the adults and made sure someone would be with Remus when he got out of St. Mungos, and Molly agreed to wait with Arthur until Remus was also released. Harry happily boarded the Hogwarts Express with his five friends who followed him to the Ministry in June trailing behind him. They quickly found the compartment where they stored all their things, and each rummaged through their trunks pulling out things they wanted to play or read. Luna grabbed her copy of last week’s Quibbler, while Hermione opened NEWT Transfiguration, and Neville took out Herbology Monthly. Ron and Ginny broke out Ron’s chess set and prepared to play, while Harry dug through his trunk’s miscellaneous compartment before pulling out several items.

“Luna,” began Harry once he was seated with several things in his lap, “I have your journal and copies of the Defensive Magic set, a muggle

notebook, and books on Meditation and Occlumency that I already gave to the others. These are your books for the DA this year."

"Alright," responded Luna eagerly as she accepted the small pile of books and began thumbing through some of them excitedly. "So you got permission to continue the DA?"

"Yes we did," answered the smiling Harry as he looked around at the five loyal friends and knew that this group would be his own Inner Circle, before turning back to Luna to complete her gifts, "and I also have two dragonhide wand holsters for you which I've already given to the others, some spare wands I want you to try after we get to Hogwarts so you'll have a back up, and a pair of my new earring communication devices that I was going to wait to give you on your birthday next week ...but, I want you to have them now ...so Happy Birthday."

Harry handed over the small wrapped velvet jewelry box as he explained the development of the charms and showed off everyone else's earrings in the compartment explaining how they worked. Luna smiled warmly throughout the explanation, and then eagerly tore open the wrapping on the small velvet box before slowly opening the lid in amazement and happiness at the thoughtful birthday gift. The miniature galaxy earrings were simply perfect, and she immediately pulled out her current radish earrings and began to put in the beautiful new ones she would wear forever.

"Let me set them to you quickly," spoke Harry as he cast the final spell setting them to Luna and watching her put them in her ear with happy smiles on their faces just as the train began to move. "Just say 'call' and then the name of who you want to talk to and ...viola."

"They're so beautiful Harry ...thank you," responded a watery eyed, sincere and very much aware Luna as she gave the green eyed wizard a large and rare full and beautiful smile before reaching forward and giving him a soft hug around his middle, sensitive to his recent injuries as she buried her face into his chest.

"Your welcome," answered Harry sheepishly, never quite used to the thanks he received for anything or being hugged so softly and

carefully, and wrapped his arms around to her back and held her for a moment glad that she was okay and knowing she needed this comfort. "I'm just glad you like them."

"I love them," she whispered into his chest barely loud enough for Harry to hear as he gave her all the time and comfort she wanted, knowing it was about more than just the necklace.

"This is really going to be a great year at Hogwarts," spoke Neville happily as he looked around the compartment at the six tight friends, two hugging, two sharing looks and blushes, a content and confident smile on his maturing face that brightened even more when his eyes met Ginny's.

"We have NEWT exams to start preparing for," added Hermione excitedly after a few moments and everyone was back in their seats as the other sixth years groaned, forcing her to give them a hard look of challenge, none stronger than Ron's who looked at her incredulously and with a healthy bit of affection as well.

"We have OWLs," continued Ginny while motioning to her and Luna in a slightly nervous and sad way.

"Don't worry, I can lend you my study materials and notes," responded Hermione, only too happy to help promote learning.

"Just don't ask her to put together your study schedule," added an exasperated Ron, before ducking his head in embarrassment at Hermione's hard glare she leveled him with as everyone else chuckled at the constantly bickering new couple who seemed to find new ways to fight just so they could kiss and make up later.

"Don't worry, you'll both do fine," responded Harry with a comforting lopsided smile to the two fifth years, "and you can always ask any of us to help."

"Thanks Harry," replied a relieved and smiling Luna, who despite being a relatively studious Ravenclaw, sometimes had problems with the practical applications of spells which was something Harry taught

them all in spades, and judging by his defense of the Platform and rescuing of her today was even better now than he had ever been.

“Yeah mate,” added Ron with a serious look to his best friend, “you saved everybody today with your actions and in training us. You can count me in for all the physical exercise I can take; if it wasn’t for this last month ...I don’t think any of us would have survived today, and I know I wouldn’t have lasted seconds without your help.”

“He’s right Harry,” spoke up Neville who got nods of agreement from Ginny and Hermione who were both slightly watery eyed as the events of the morning came back to them all. “You are the reason we are all still here today.”

“Thanks guys,” responded Harry gratefully, but with a growing smirk on his face and mischievousness in his eyes that spelled doom for the others. “Just remember those thoughts when you’re running laps around the lake every morning, especially during the freezing cold winter months.”

Harry started laughing loudly at the looks of horror on everyone’s faces, but none more so than Ron who turned white as a ghost as he realized what he just got himself into with his declaration of training. Soon the girls and Neville slowly started to join in, knowing how much Ron protested all physical activities the entire month now to praise them and get himself in over his head with his big mouth once again. He slowly regained his color and laughed along with his friends all somewhat giddy and emotional after the events of the morning and needing to lighten up the atmosphere in their compartment.

The battle was still so fresh, and that they were all allowed to still travel by train to school was a relief since it would allow them to relax and in Harry’s case avoid a stay in the hospital wing. They mostly discussed inconsequential things about their summers and the upcoming school year. Everyone but Harry speculated on who the new DADA teacher would be, and what their training schedules were going to look like once Harry had his way. The friends would have the whole school year to study and train for the upcoming war with Voldemort and his Death Eaters, but for now Harry wanted to just sit, rest, recover, and enjoy the companionship of his close friends since

if anything, this seemingly never ending summer taught him how important those he loved were to him.

AN: THE END! Finally!

I am so happy to finally be done with this story, at least for now. Yes, I had originally planned to write an entire sixth year story, but there were so many things for Harry to get started and going over the summer that it just spiraled out of control. Eventually, I will continue with this Honks sequel, but have many other things to get done that I have neglected for too long.

I am posting the beginnings of several of my other stories today, and they should be up by the time you finish this, and I welcome you all to keep reading. I thank you all for taking the time to read and for those of you, who have reviewed, you have truly made this a wonderful experience for me and I humbly thank you all for your kind words and encouragement.

Peace and love to all.

Kassien